

## What funding cuts mean for PBS and NPR

Stations in big cities are likely to reduce staff. Rural outlets may not survive.

BY KAITLYN HUAMANI AND STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

Ken Burns has made more than 30 documentaries and won multiple Emmys.

But without funding from public television, his educational programming such as "The Civil War" and "Baseball" might never have existed, he told "PBS News Hour" in an interview Thursday.

Even today, the acclaimed filmmaker whose works — including his upcoming project "The American Revolution" — are broadcast on PBS, said his films get around 20% of their budgets from the Corp. for Public Broadcasting, the body Congress recently voted to defund.

Projects that receive a higher percentage of their funding through public media "just won't be able to be made," Burns said. "And so there'll be less representation by all the different kinds of filmmakers. People com-

ing up will have an impossible time getting started."

The U.S. Senate this week passed the Trump administration's proposal to cancel \$9 billion in federal funding previously allocated for foreign aid and public broadcasting, and the House of Representatives approved the package after midnight Friday, sending it to President Trump's desk.

The Corp. for Public Broadcasting, which administers the funds for NPR radio stations and PBS TV affiliates, is on track to lose \$11 billion that had previously been budgeted for the next two years.

The impact of those cuts will be deeply felt across both NPR and PBS, leaders of both organizations told The Times. Layoffs and reduced programming are expected, and the blows will disproportionately strike smaller markets that rely more heavily on federal funding.

"This is going to hit hardest in the places that need it the most," said Gabriel Kahn, a professor at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Stations in smaller markets are staffed significantly [See PBS, A12]



CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

L.A. COUNTY Sheriff Robert Luna, top, said the deputies were "the best of the best." Above, firefighters raise a flag at the Biscailuz Center Training Academy.

## BLAST KILLS 3 LAWMEN AT EAST L.A. SITE

The arson unit deputies were moving ordnance at sheriff's training academy.

BY RICHARD WINTON, NATHAN SOLIS, HANNAH FRY, CHRISTOPHER BUCHANAN AND CONNOR SHEETS

Three deputies were killed Friday in an explosion at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Biscailuz Center Training Academy in East L.A., the deadliest incident for the agency in more than 160 years.

Deputies with the arson explosives detail, an elite unit within the Sheriff's Department, were moving ordnance in the training center's parking lot about 7:30 a.m. when the blast occurred. The explosive device had been collected in Santa Monica on Thursday, law enforcement sources told The Times.

The deputies, who have not been publicly identified, died at the scene. They had served between 19 and 33 years with the department, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said during a Friday morning news conference.

"They're the best of the best," Luna said of the agency's special enforcement bureau. "And the individuals who work our arson explosives detail, they have years of training. ... They are fantastic experts, and unfortunately, I lost three of them today."

He said it will take time — possibly weeks or months — [See Explosion, A7]

## Weather warnings met with shrugs

Texas floods and L.A. firestorms leave meteorologists with regret and questions.

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

Meteorologists warned about the chance of flash floods days before Texas' Fourth of July disaster that killed at least 133. Yet, local officials in San Antonio, wrote in a recent Facebook post. "At times, I've been overwhelmed with forecaster regret that I could have done more the night before in my weather report."

"I have cried on multiple occasions," Chris Suchan, chief meteorologist with WOAI-TV Channel 4, the NBC affiliate in San Antonio, wrote in a recent Facebook post. "At times, I've been overwhelmed with forecaster regret that I could have done more the night before in my weather report."

Forecasters often issue alerts for possible flooding, landslides and "red flag" fire warnings multiple times a year. Sometimes, those warnings are followed by major catastrophes, but other times they are not.

And that has led some to become complacent, rather than heeding the alerts.

Two massive disasters

## Bukele's critics flee El Salvador



SALVADOR MELENDEZ Associated Press

RUTH Eleonora Lopez, a leader of a human rights group in El Salvador, at a court hearing post-arrest.

Droves of journalists, human rights activists and others leave out of fear of president.

BY KATE LINTHICUM

MEXICO CITY — They have fled to Guatemala, Mexico, Costa Rica and Spain. Most left in a hurry with few possessions, unsure of when — or whether — they would be able to return home.

As El Salvador cracks down on dissent, jailing crit-

ics of President Nayib Bukele, droves of human rights activists, journalists and other members of civil society are leaving the country out of fear.

More than 100 people have fled in recent months — the biggest exodus of political exiles since the country's bloody civil war. That puts El Salvador in the company of other authoritarian Latin American nations, including Nicaragua and Venezuela, where dissent has been criminalized and critics choose between prison and exile.

[See Critics, A4]

## An owl-culling plan hits a roadblock

Federal plan to kill thousands of one species to save others faces bipartisan opposition

By Lila Seidman



An unusual alliance of Republican lawmakers and animal rights advocates, together with others, is creating storm clouds for a plan to protect one threatened owl by killing a more common one.

Last August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved a plan to shoot roughly 450,000 barred owls in California, Oregon and Washington over three decades. The barred owls have been out-competing imperiled northern spotted owls in the Pacific Northwest, as well as California spotted owls, pushing them out of their territory.

Supporters of the approach — including conser-

cluding one study that would remove barred owls from more than 192,000 acres in Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

Two were nixed before federal funding was allocated and never got off the ground, said Peter Tira, a spokesperson for the state wildlife agency. Another, a study in collaboration with University of Maryland biologists to better understand barred owl dispersal patterns in western forests, was nearly complete when terminated.

"Under President Donald J. Trump's leadership, we are eliminating wasteful programs, cutting unnecessary costs and ensuring every dollar serves a clear pur-

## Is curtain falling on late-night TV hosts?

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

The shocking cancellation of "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" is a sign that time is running out for one of TV's most beloved formats.

The late-night talk show was invented in the 1950s as a way for networks to own their own programming rather than have it provided by sponsors. Now, amid shrinking audiences and a politically turbulent climate for free speech, the familiar desk-and-sofa tableau is in serious trouble.

CBS announced Thursday that the upcoming 2025-26 TV season for "The Late Show" will be its last. Execu-



# CALIFORNIA

SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2025 :: LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

## A GREAT MIGRATION

A visitor admires life-size elephants at an installation spanning four blocks of Santa Monica Boulevard.

## 21 children removed after alleged surrogacy scheme

Arcadia police say couple neglected the kids. One mother says she was misled.

By SUMMER LIN

Surrogate mothers who gave birth to children for an Arcadia couple are looking for answers after the pair were recently accused of neglect and 21 children and babies were removed from their home.

On May 7, Arcadia police officers responded to a local

hospital for a report of a 2-month-old child with significant head trauma, according to Arcadia Police Lt. Kollin Cieadlo. Officers confirmed that the child had apparently been shaken or dropped, or had gone through a traumatic incident.

Detectives responded to a home in the 600 block of West Camino Real Avenue and discovered there were 15 other children inside the residence, Cieadlo said. Police wrote a search warrant for surveillance footage, hard drives and phone records from the home and identi-

fied the nanny, 56-year-old Chunmei Li, as the suspect in the child abuse. Officials said they also corroborated that the parents, 65-year-old Guojun Xuan and 38-year-old Silvia Zhang, allegedly knew the child was injured and did nothing for two days.

Two days later, Zhang and Xuan were arrested on suspicion of felony child endangerment and neglect and their children were taken into protective custody, police said. The nanny, Li, wasn't at the home and is still outstanding. Six other children who were tempo-

rarily away from the home at the time have since been taken into protective custody by the Department of Children and Family Services and placed into foster care.

The 21 children, some of whom were born through surrogacy, range from 2 months to 13 years old, with the majority of them between 1 to 3 years old, Cieadlo said. The case was deferred by the district attorney for further investigation and the couple was released without any charges being filed.

In an interview with Bio-  
[See Surrogate, B4]

## Immigration crackdown shifts north to Sacramento

Newsom's office blasts the sweeps, saying Border Patrol should work 'at the border.'

By RACHEL URANGA AND BRITTNY MEJIA

Border Patrol agents raided a Home Depot and other locations in Sacramento on Thursday in what appeared to be a heavily orchestrated operation intended to send a message that the Trump administration would not back down on immigration enforcement, despite legal blockades.

While the raids took place miles from the state Capitol grounds, Greg Bovino, the U.S. Border chief of the El Centro sector who has been leading operations in Southern California, recorded a video in front of the statehouse shortly after.

"There is no such thing as a sanctuary city. There's no such thing as a sanctuary state," Bovino posted on X, in a produced video featuring the state Capitol and highway signs reading Sacramento. "This is how and why we secure the homeland for Ma and Pa America. We've got your back, whether it's here in Sacramento or nationwide, we're here and we're not going anywhere."

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office immediately blasted the sweeps.

"The Border Patrol should do their jobs — at the border — instead of continuing their tirade statewide of illegal racial profiling and illegal arrests," said Diana Crofts-Pelayo, a spokesperson for Newsom.

On Wednesday, Newsom

had railed against Trump's immigration crackdown during a news conference at a Downey Memorial Christian Church, where agents swarmed and arrested an individual in June. Parishioners at the church remain shaken, and one girl he met was carrying around her passport.

"She's here legally. She's carrying her passport," he said. "That's Trump's America, 2025."

The Sacramento enforcement came after a federal judge in Los Angeles last week blocked agents from using racial profiling to carry out warrantless arrests that have upended hundreds of lives in immigrant communities throughout Southern California.

And it took place in an area that, along with the Central Valley and a large swath of Northern California, is under a similar preliminary injunction stemming from unlawful raids

[See Crackdown, B2]

## Trump officials pay a visit to Alcatraz

By SALVADOR HERNANDEZ AND SEEMA MEHTA

Two federal officials toured the former Alcatraz penitentiary in the San Francisco Bay early Thursday morning as part of the Trump administration's effort to reopen the infamous island prison, a move that critics say would be more expensive than building a new prison.

U.S. Atty. Gen. Pam Bondi and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum visited Alcatraz before the usual rush of tourists at the now-shuttered island prison, an apparent effort by the Trump administration to continue efforts to reopen the penitentiary.

But critics of the Trump administration have called the effort a stunt and a distraction, with former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi referring to the visit and the push to reopen the prison as "the Trump Administration's stupidest initiative yet." Pelosi's district includes the island and adjacent San Francisco.

"Make no mistake: this stupidity is a diversionary

## L.A. woman faked an abduction by ICE, feds say

By LIBOR JANY AND ZURIE POPE

Federal prosecutors have charged a woman with faking her abduction by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in downtown Los Angeles last month, alleging a "well-orchestrated conspiracy" meant to elicit public sym-

pathy and donations based on her undocumented status.

Authorities on Thursday announced that Yuriana Julia Pelaez Calderon, 41, of South L.A. has been charged with conspiracy and making false statements to federal officers, with prison terms of up to five years. She has not yet entered a plea and is expected to make her initial

court appearance in the coming weeks.

"Dangerous rhetoric that ICE agents are 'kidnapping' illegal immigrants is being recklessly peddled by politicians and echoed in the media to inflame the public and discredit our courageous federal agents," U.S. Atty. Bill Essayli said in a statement.

On June 25, friends, fam-

ily members and activists gathered outside a Jack in the Box in downtown to decry what they said was the kidnapping of a local mother by masked men.

A lawyer for the family told reporters that Calderon, who goes by Juli, had pulled into the restaurant's parking lot to evade two trucks that had followed her down Alameda Street.

As she did so, the lawyer said, the trucks pulled in behind her and armed men who didn't identify themselves sprang out and took her into their custody.

The lawyer said Calderon recounted being taken to a parking lot near the San Ysidro border crossing, where she was pressured by ICE staffers to sign self-de-

[See Abduction, B5]

Voices GUSTAVO ARELLANO COLUMNIST

## The godfather of Trump immigrant plan

Glenn Spencer spread the lie that Mexicans came here with a nefarious plot

He inveighs against illegal immigration in

CITIZENSHIP

kicked off his campaign, he told The Times in a 2001 profile, after



"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

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## Insurers Reject More Requests For Medicines

### A 25% Increase Over 7 Years, Data Shows

By SARAH KLIFF

Prescription drug denials by private insurers in the United States jumped 25 percent from 2016 to 2023, according to a new analysis of more than four billion claims, a practice that has contributed to rising public outrage about the nation's private health insurance system.

The report, compiled for The New York Times by the health analytics company Komodo Health, shows that denial rates rose from 18.3 percent to 22.9 percent. The rejections went up across many major health plans, including the country's largest private insurer, UnitedHealthcare.

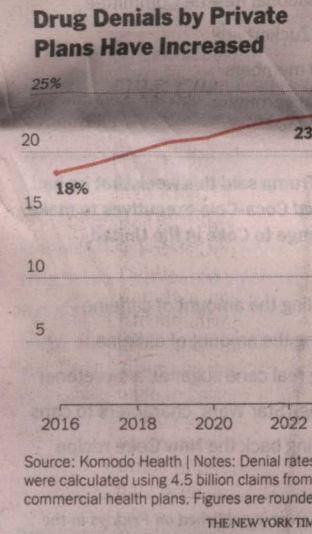
The data offers a rare look into the largely hidden world of rejected insurance claims. While some government-funded health plans are required to publish their denial rates, most private insurers keep that information confidential. Komodo Health draws from private databases that collect denial details from pharmacies, insurers and intermediaries.

Claim denials are "quite opaque, and a lot of decisions are made by private actors," said Dr. Aaron Schwartz, a health economist at the University of Pennsylvania. "There are legitimate questions about whether they are appropriate."

Widespread resentment toward health insurers boiled over last December after the murder of UnitedHealthcare's chief executive, Brian Thompson. Doctors and patients alike took to social media to share stories of insurers' refusal to pay for what they said was needed medical care.

Experts who have studied denials said the skyrocketing costs of

Continued on Page A18



### MEDIA MEMO

## G.O.P. Guts PBS and NPR To Cap Quest

### Changed Media World Made Fertile Ground

By JIM RUTENBERG

They tried under Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. Newt Gingrich gave it a go when he controlled the House, and Bob Dole did, too, when he held power in the Senate.

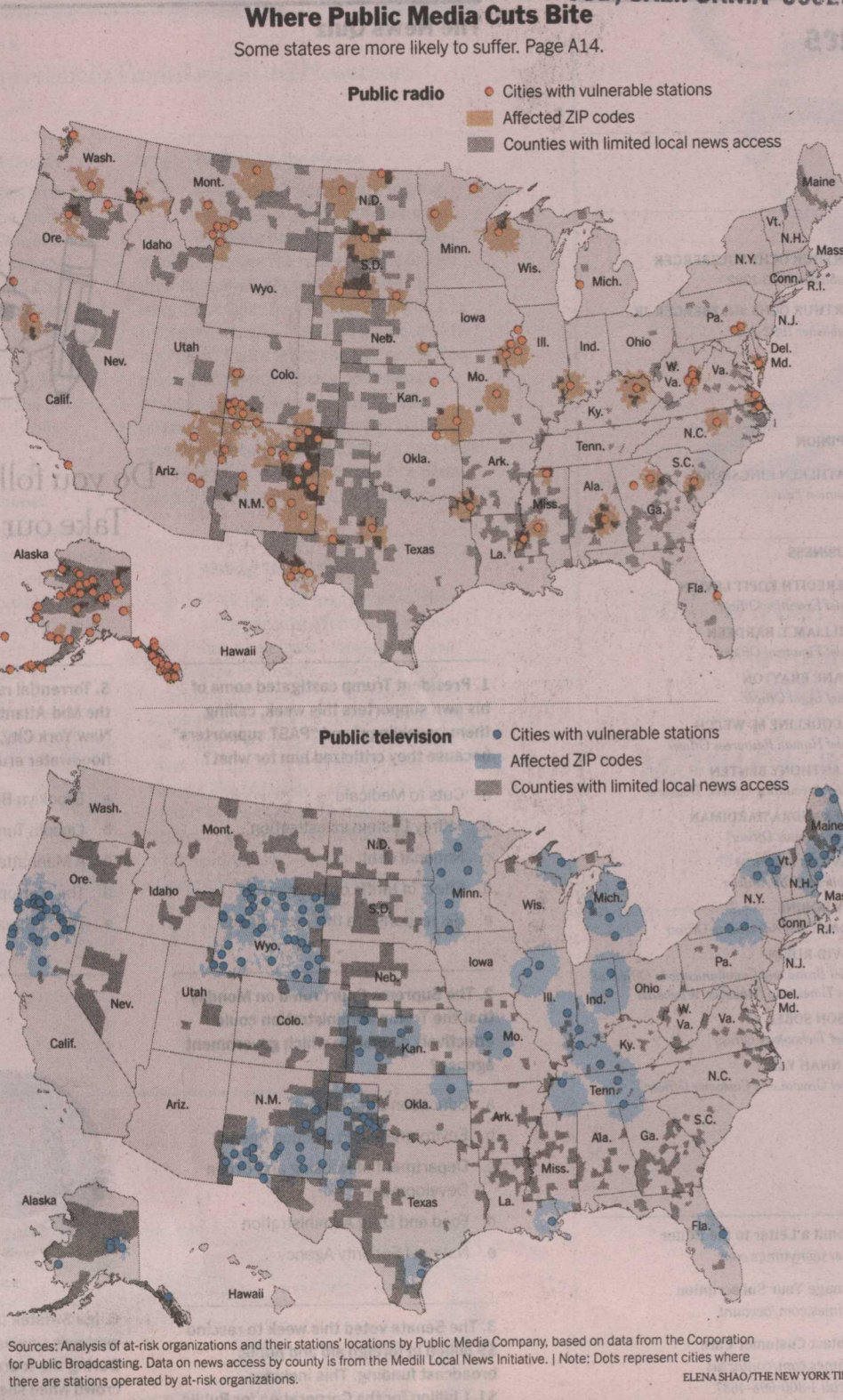
But for five decades, Republicans failed time and again to choke off federal funding for public broadcasting. Some were afraid of being accused of avicide (for "killing Big Bird" of "Sesame Street"), while others appreciated their local public stations (and the airtime they personally received) — always stopping the party short of turning their threats against PBS and NPR into law.

That they have finally been able to do it now, voting on Friday to claw back \$1.1 billion in public broadcasting funds, on one level speaks to the power of President Trump. His threat to support primary challenges against any Republicans who might try to block the cuts all but guaranteed they would go through this time.

"Republicans who supported public media for their entire careers are voting to kill it, and there is only one reason: Donald Trump," said Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, who has been at the center of efforts to protect public media for decades. "When Trump sets a loyalty test today, Republicans fall in line."

Mr. Markey argued that Mr. Trump's moves against PBS and NPR were part of the administration's larger campaign to

Continued on Page A14



### THE WEATHER

Drenching showers and thunderstorms will persist east of the Mississippi River. Severe storms can develop in the Dakotas. Sunny in the Northeast. Weather map, Page B10.

## TRUMP HAS BONDI PUSH TO RELEASE EPSTEIN RECORDS

### GRAND JURY TESTIMONY

#### Doesn't Meet Demand of Critics to Divulge All Investigative Files

By GLENN THRUSH  
and MICHAEL GOLD

WASHINGTON — President Trump ordered Attorney General Pam Bondi to seek the public release of grand jury testimony from the prosecution of Jeffrey Epstein. The move, announced Thursday night, came amid growing calls from both parties for more information about the government's investigation of the disgraced financier.

Mr. Trump, under intense pressure from his right-wing base after a Justice Department review found no evidence to support conspiracy theories about the sex trafficking case, ordered Ms. Bondi to "produce any and all pertinent Grand Jury testimony, subject to Court approval," in a social media post.

The president cited "the ridiculous amount of publicity given to Jeffrey Epstein" for his directive, which falls far short of demands from some congressional Republicans and Democrats to make public all investigative files collected by the department and the F.B.I., not just testimony presented in federal court.

Ms. Bondi, a Trump loyalist accused by far-right influencers of abetting a cover-up, responded immediately with a post on social media that undercut the memo the department and the F.B.I. drafted this month declaring the case closed.

"President Trump — we are ready to move the court tomorrow to unseal the grand jury transcripts," she wrote, quickly reversing course at his command. But it was not clear that she would succeed, because the secrecy of grand jury transcripts is highly protected.

Mr. Trump's request came hours after The Wall Street Journal reported on a 50th birthday greeting it said Mr. Trump sent Mr. Epstein in 2003, including a sexually suggestive drawing, an expression of friendship and a reference to secrets they shared.

The president vehemently denied the report, which The New York Times has not verified. He warned Rupert Murdoch, the founder of News Corp, the paper's parent company, that he planned to sue.

An angry Mr. Trump, referring to himself in the third person in a

Continued on Page A16

## Pennsylvania High School Grapples With a Most Divisive Grad

By KENNETH P. VOGEL

WASHINGTON — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel provoked strong reactions around the world when he announced at the White House this month that he had nominated President Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

While it drew much less attention, his suggestion during his trip to the United States that he would make a different nomination for a much more parochial honor is inflaming tensions about 150 miles north of Washington.

"Next time I'm here, we go down to Cheltenham High School, near Philadelphia, and I'll nominate you for the hall of fame," Mr. Netanyahu told Mark Levin, the conservative commentator, during a Fox News interview that aired last week.

Earlier in the interview, the men discussed their shared connection to the public high school in Cheltenham Township. Mr. Netanyahu, who graduated in 1967, was born in Israel but lived in Cheltenham for several years with his family while his father taught at a local Jewish college; Mr. Levin, class of 1974, was born and raised

### Bid to Push Netanyahu, Class of '67, Off the Wall of Fame

in the area. Mr. Netanyahu has already been inducted into the school's hall of fame. Mr. Levin has not.

In Cheltenham, a racially and religiously diverse Philadelphia suburb, the televised reminiscence intensified a debate about whether either man deserves to

be honored by their alma mater.

In some ways, the tempest has mirrored a broader national divide over Israel's war in Gaza and Mr. Trump's presidency. But it has also evoked subtler questions — about fame versus acclaim, the evolution of reputation and hometown heroes who do not always return the affection — that do not easily lend themselves to partisan coding.

Officers from the alumni association were preparing for a closed-door meeting with school district officials, where they were to discuss

Continued on Page A9

## How an I.R.S. Rule About Faith Could Sway the Race for Mayor

By MAYA KING

Four days after his remarkable showing in New York's Democratic mayoral primary, Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani appeared at the Harlem headquarters of a group headed by the Rev. Al Sharpton. He acknowledged the leaders and biblical scriptures that fueled his campaign.

"Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning," Mr. Mamdani said, a reference to Psalm 30:5, a scripture that is especially popular in Black churches. "And it has been night for far too long in this city."

Mr. Mamdani did not come to the gathering on June 28, for the National Action Network, explicitly seeking an endorsement from

### Some New York Clergy Torn Over Newfound Power to Endorse

mayoral race may be able to secure one without tax repercussions.

The I.R.S. said in a court filing last week that houses of worship could endorse political candidates to their congregations without losing their tax-exempt status. The move was initially seen as the agency's formal termination of a longstanding but spottily enforced rule against campaigning from the pulpit.

But in New York, the ruling could also open up a new front in

## A Father's 'Everything,' Taken From Him Aboard a Tragic Flight

By PRAGATI K.B.  
and MUJIB MASHAL

AHMEDABAD, India — Before dawn, in the solitude of his upstairs room, Anil Ambalal Patel prepared to say a last goodbye to the couple who had brought love back into his life.

Lingering in his bed, the city around him still asleep, he stared at the two faces on his phone screen: his son, Harshit, and his daughter-in-law, Pooja. He stared and stared, and then moved the phone close to his lips, giving each forehead a kiss.

They were gone now, and what little joy he had finally found after years of hardship was gone, too. On this day, he would be with them once more as he scattered their ashes in the Narmada River, where three streams meet.

Twelve days earlier, Mr. Patel, a





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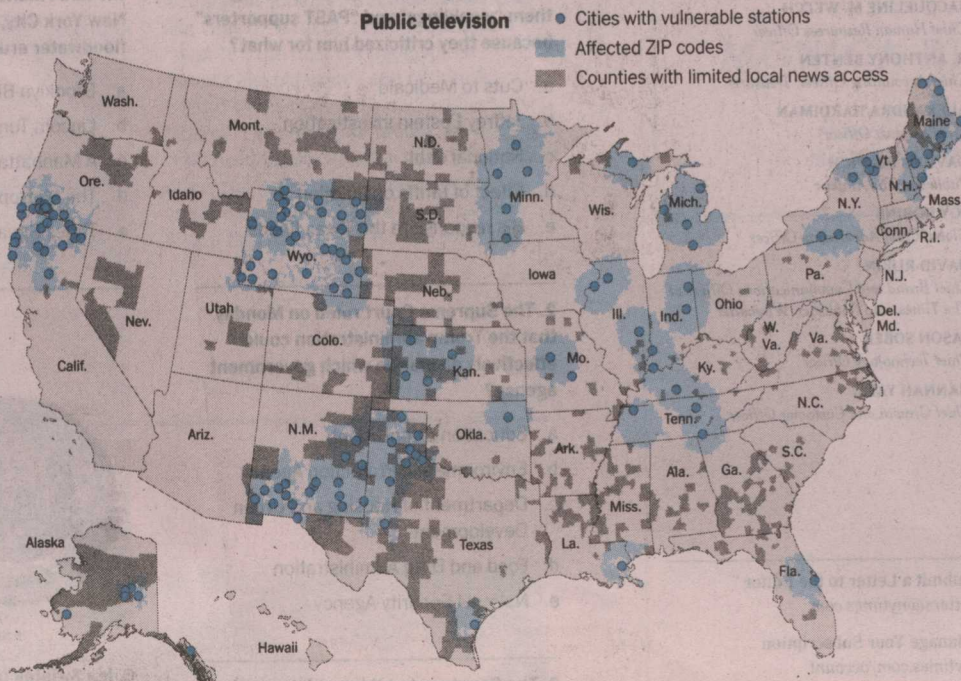
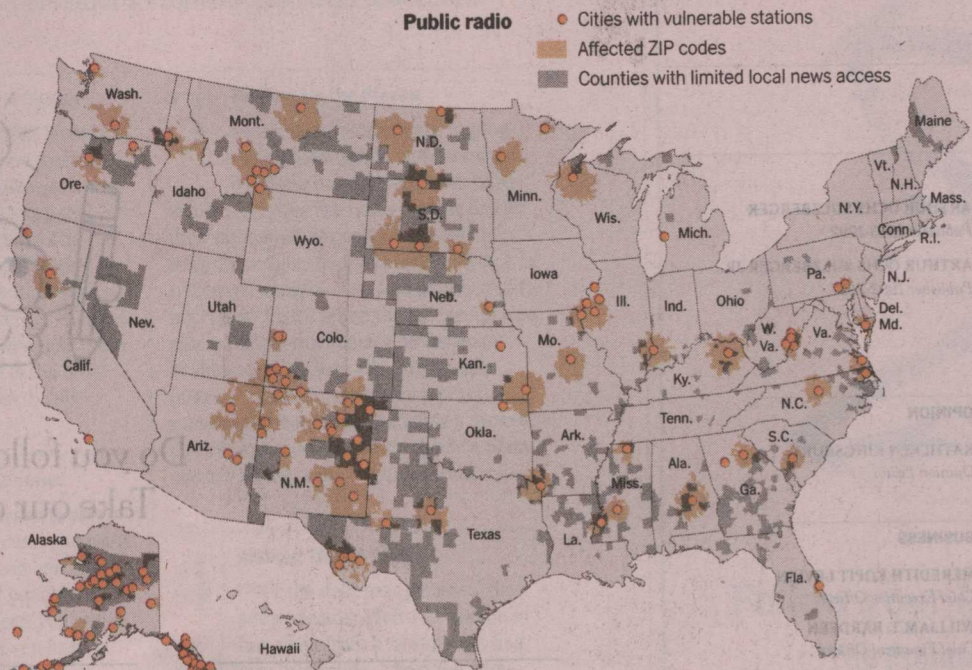
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on Page A14

## Where Public Media Cuts Bite

Some states are more likely to suffer. Page A14.



Sources: Analysis of at-risk organizations and their stations' locations by Public Media Company, based on data from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Data on news access by county is from the Medill Local News Initiative. | Note: Dots represent cities where there are stations operated by at-risk organizations.

ELENA SHAO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

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be honored by their alma mater.



### 3 ECONOMY

A Federal Reserve official laid out the case for a small rate cut when the central bank votes on policy this month.



### 4 MEDIA

Why Is Stephen Colbert's 'Late Show' being canceled? The chief TV critic for The Times has some thoughts.



### 9 SPORTS

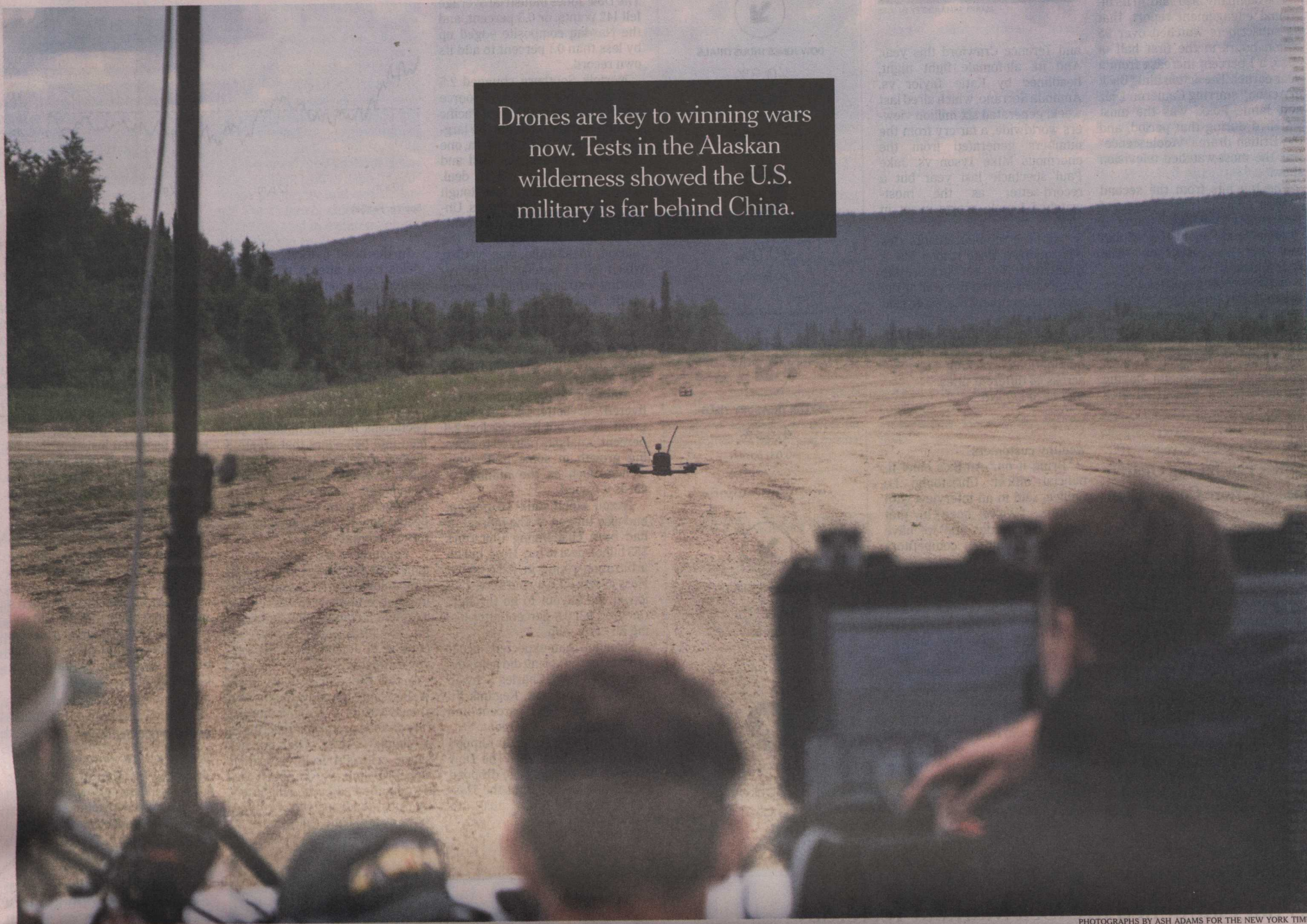
Lloyd Howell Jr., leader of the N.F.L. players' union, stepped down after questions over a potential conflict of interest.

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SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2025 B1

# Business

## The New York Times



Drones are key to winning wars now. Tests in the Alaskan wilderness showed the U.S. military is far behind China.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ASH ADAMS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, a drone-testing exercise at the Yukon Training Area in Alaska. Soren Monroe-Anderson, below center, is the chief executive of Neros, a drone start-up in El Segundo, Calif., that is providing about 6,000 drones to Ukraine this year.

# Why the U.S. Lags in Drone Warfare

By FARAH STOCKMAN

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA — On a patch of dirt in the vast wilderness in Alaska, a long-range drone roared like a lawn mower as it shot into the sky. It scanned the ground for a target it had been programmed to recognize, and then dived, attempting to destroy it by crashing into it. But it missed, landing about 80 feet away.

On another attempt, a drone nose-dived at launch. On a subsequent try, a drone crashed into a mountain.

These drones weren't flown by amateur hobbyists. They were launched by drone manufacturers paid by a special unit of the Department of Defense as part of an urgent effort to update U.S. capabilities. For four days last month, they tested prototypes of one-way drones by trying to crash them into programmed targets, while soldiers tried to stop the drones with special electronic equipment.



The exercise aimed to help U.S. defense contractors and soldiers get better at drone warfare. But it illustrated some of the ways in which the U.S. military could be unprepared for such a conflict. The nation lags behind Russia and China in manufacturing drones, training soldiers to use them and defending against them, according to interviews with more than a dozen U.S. military officials and drone industry experts.

"We all know the same thing. We aren't giving the American war fighter what they need to survive warfare today," said Trent Emeneker, project manager of the Autonomy Portfolio at the military's Defense Innovation Unit, which organized the exercise in Alaska and paid for the development of the drone prototypes that flew there. "If we had to go to war tomorrow, do we have what we need? No. What we are trying to

CONTINUED ON PAGE B6

On This Streaming Service, It's the Worldview of Trump

Wall St. Firms Eye Utilities To Tap Into the A.I. Boom

'Rice Minister' Scrambles To Rescue His Ruling Party



## Transfer portal shakes up college basketball's list

Changes in men's rosters spur updates to USA TODAY Sports' Top 25 projections. **In Sports**

## Some 'poor people' habits can be difficult to give up

Always turn off lights? Order water when dining? Here are frugal things people do. **In Money**



PROVIDED BY  
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## It takes two to tango: 'Dancing With Sharks'

Host Tom Bergeron dishes out jokes (and risks) as underwater contest kicks off Shark Week on Discovery Channel. **In Life**

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JUL 21 2025



**Susan Page**  
Washington Bureau Chief  
USA TODAY

## Trump's thunder stolen by Epstein

Even on a roll, president haunted by financier

Congress last week handed over the power of the purse to President Donald Trump without even a thank-you-for-your-service in return as the Supreme Court cleared the way for him to slash the workforce at the Education Department and, presumably, elsewhere.

So why isn't the president smiling?

Answer: Jeffrey Epstein.

After continuing to amass unprecedented power in the White House, steamrolling a compliant Congress and being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by world leaders more eager to flatter than confront him, Trump finds himself flummoxed by the case of a disgraced financier who died in a jail cell six years ago.



**President Donald Trump continues to amass unprecedented power in the White House.**

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Epstein's ghost is beginning to haunt the White House.

The very tools that helped win Trump two terms – the openness to conspiracy, the distrust of elites, the eruption of a viral moment – have now turned to bedevil him.

In this case, the assertion this month by the Department of Justice and the FBI that the Epstein case was over and done with was met by derision and disbelief among some of the president's most loyal supporters. After all, such influential MAGA voices as Tucker Carlson and Steve Bannon had been insisting for years that Epstein's

See PAGE, Page 2A

### LOSING HOME

## Black family pressed to sell, stifle dreams

Land was to be used for a school that was never built



John Houston stands near the property formerly owned by his father in Washington. PHOTOS BY RAMON DOMPOR FOR USA TODAY



**Suzette Hackney**  
National columnist  
USA TODAY

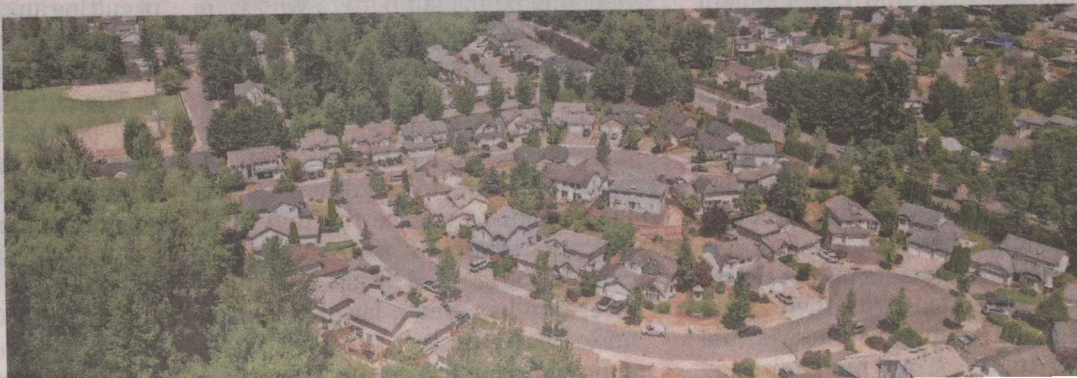
### RENTON, WA

All it took was an X. • The promises of any long-term generational wealth for the Houston family ended when their illiterate father marked his name as an X and signed away the nearly 10-acre property he and his wife had sacrificed to buy and build a home on for their children. • It's a story all too common in America, particularly among Black folks. Eminent domain, or the threat of its use, has been wielded to acquire the property of Black families – in cities and rural areas alike – allegedly needed for public use. Highways. Sewer lines. Green space. Commercial development. Government buildings. • I say allegedly because in the case of the Houstons, their parents' property was purchased in 1968 by the Renton School District to erect a new school. It was to be called Apollo Middle School. • It was never built.

See LOSING HOME, Page 6A

### ABOUT THIS SERIES

This is the second in the occasional series "Losing Home." USA TODAY columnist Suzette Hackney explores what "home" means and the trials and triumphs of those who have lost theirs, those fighting to stay and those seeking a new home.





## Column: NFL 'dirty player' belongs in Hall of Fame

Ndamukong Suh has a history of questionable plays, but he was good, Freeman says. **In Sports**

## Skims takes future of underwear back to past

Fashion experts weigh in on retro designs from Kim Kardashian's shapewear brand. **In Money**

## Marlee Matlin: 'I'm not going anywhere'

Oscar-winning actress and deaf activist opens up about life's highs and lows in documentary "Not Alone Anymore." **In Life**

# USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | \$3 | MONDAY, JULY 14, 2025

JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES FOR TRIBECA FESTIVAL



JUL 14 2025

## In Texas, victims may not be found

Loved ones face reality of floods, seek closure

Rick Jervis and Christopher Cann  
USA TODAY

Hours ticked by. Days morphed into long, painful weeks. Then agonizing months.

Still, Lysa Gindinova clung to hope. A hope that somehow, somewhere amid the tangled mountains of mud-caked debris along the South Toe River in Western North Carolina, the bodies of her 13-year-old cousin, Yevhenii Segen, and their grandmother, Tatiana Novitnia, would be found.

The two were swept away by floods spawned by Hurricane Helene last year. Rescue crews found the bodies of an aunt and uncle who were missing. But not Yevhenii and Novitnia.



Fire Station Acuna Mexico performs search and rescue operations near Camp Mystic on July 10 in Hunt, Texas. BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

Nearly 10 months later, there's still no sign of them – and the family, who fled the fighting in Ukraine for the serene mountains of North Carolina, still wrestles with the fact that they may never see them again.

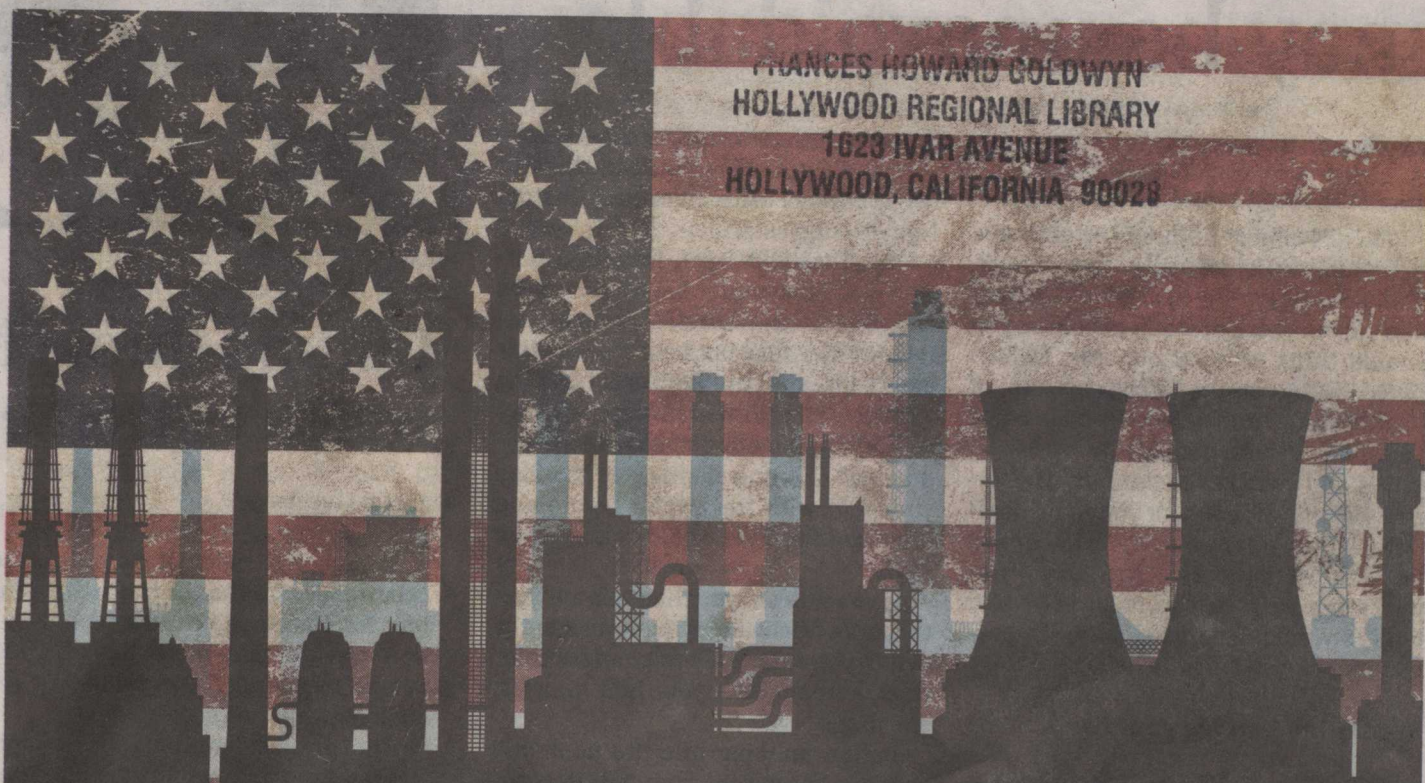
"It doesn't feel real," Gindinova told USA TODAY.

Gindinova and her family are among countless residents across the United States whose loved ones are presumed dead but never found months or years after natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, mudslides and earthquakes.

Families in Texas are starting to face that same haunting realization after the deadly Hill Country flash floods, as volunteers continue to scour the region for the missing.

At least 120 bodies have been

See FLOODS, Page 3A



### 3 to 10 years

are often required to create new factories, depending on the industry.

### 8%

of total nonfarm employment consists of manufacturing work, down from 22% in 1979.

### 10%

increase in manufacturing employment may occur if tariffs are able to eliminate the entire U.S. trade deficit.

### 381,000

manufacturing job openings were available as of April, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### 14%

increase year-over-year in 2024 in enrollment of public two-year institutions that focus on vocational programs, outpacing the 3% growth in public four-year schools.

ILLUSTRATION BY  
TIFFANY CLEMENS/USA TODAY;  
GETTY IMAGES

## Trump vowed to bring back 'Made in USA'

### Will America's workforce be ready?

Bailey Schulz USA TODAY

Winton Machine, an Atlanta-based manufacturer, is desperate to hire. So far, there are few takers. • CEO and cofounder Lisa Winton has been searching for a salesperson since March. A mechanist job has been open even longer, with less than a dozen applications over the past year – none of whom had the skill set required for the job. • Winton has done what she can to attract workers, like forming a relationship with local technical colleges, offering applicants flexible hours and rehiring retirees. Still, keeping her staffing up has been a challenge. • The push for more domestic manufacturing through tariffs, Winton worries, will only make matters worse.

"If more factories move into an area, who are they competing with? They're competing with other factories," she said. "Whether it be machinists or maintenance or assembly, all of the different types of jobs that are available – they have to come from somewhere."

President Donald Trump has said his tariffs, which range from a 10% baseline tariff on trade partners to 50% on steel imports, will have jobs



"If more factories move into an area, who are they

competing with?

They're competing with other factories."

Lisa Winton,  
CEO and cofounder  
of Winton Machine

See MANUFACTURING, Page 4A



JUL 14 2025

FRANCES HOWARD GOLDWYN  
HOLLYWOOD REGIONAL LIBRARY  
1623 IVAR AVENUE  
HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90028

**3 to 10  
years**

are often required to  
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depending on the  
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**10%**

# Trump vowed to bring back 'Made in USA'

## Will America's workforce be ready?



# DT NEWS

DOWNTOWNNEWS.COM

July 14, 2025 | VOL. 54 | #28

## DOUGHNUT-FUELED DREAMSCAPE

Eric Joyner's 'Looking Sideways'  
at the Corey Helford Gallery

### A Fond Farewell

After 117 years, Cole's  
French Dip is calling it quits

+ Plumeria Festival

THE VOICE OF DOWNTOWN LA SINCE 1972





LUKE JOHNSON Los Angeles Times

## FLYING DOWN THE STRETCH

Pigs run the last leg of a race on the opening day of the Orange County Fair in Costa Mesa on Friday. The fair runs through Aug. 17.

# Housing activist in protest is found dead

Supporters say Benito Flores fell from a tree house he was using to protest his eviction.

BY LIAM DILLON

Benito Flores, who more than five years ago seized a state-owned home in El Sereno to protest against homelessness in Los Angeles, has died.

A 70-year-old retired welder, Flores had been fighting to remain in the home. Last month, he and a group of supporters prevented Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department deputies from evicting him from a small duplex on a narrow street in El Sereno.

As part of the eviction defense, Flores constructed an elaborate tree house 28 feet high in an ash tree in the home's backyard, where he planned to retreat if police attempted to haul him out.

In the six weeks since the failed eviction attempt, Flores continued to fortify the property, including building additional defenses in a second tree in the backyard. Supporters believe that Flores died after falling out of that tree.

On Friday afternoon, a neighbor found him unresponsive on the ground near the tree with his safety harness broken, said Roberto Flores, who operates a private community center in El



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

**BENITO** Flores had been fighting to remain in a state-owned house in El Sereno.

Sereno and helped organize the ongoing protests.

"He's a martyr for human rights, for the decent right of housing for everyone," said Roberto Flores, who is not related to Benito.

Benito Flores was the final holdout in a protest that captured nationwide interest when it began in March 2020.

Flores and a dozen others occupied empty homes owned by the California De-

partment of Transportation, which the agency acquired by the hundreds a half-century ago for a freeway expansion that never happened.

The activists, who call themselves "Reclaiming Our Homes," argued that the true crime wasn't breaking into empty houses, but rather that publicly owned homes were left vacant while tens of thousands of people lived on the streets of Los

Angeles.

Backed by a wave of public support, the dozen "Reclaimers" were allowed to stay legally in Caltrans-owned homes for two years through a temporary lease agreement managed by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. When that expired in late 2022, Flores and many Reclaimers attempted to remain in the properties, saying the alternatives offered by the hous-

# Mother's ex is charged in killing of her 5-year-old

BY JAMES QUEALLY

A murder charge was filed Friday against a man accused of beating his ex-girlfriend's 5-year-old son to death and leaving the body inside a dumpster in Panorama City two weeks ago, authorities said.

Brycson Gaddis, 20, was arrested Wednesday and, if convicted, faces a potential sentence of life in prison in the vicious beating death of Elyjah Hearn, according to the Los Angeles County district attorney's office. Prosecutors charged him with murder and assault on a child causing death, authorities said.

"This is truly a heart-breaking and horrific case, and our deepest sympathies go out to the young victim's family," Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman said in a statement. "We are committed to seeking justice and will ensure this defendant is held responsible for his actions." Gaddis did not enter a plea during a brief court appearance in Van Nuys and is back in court next

month, officials said.

Prosecutors allege Gaddis beat the boy to death inside of an apartment in the 14500 block of Lanark Street on July 11.

The boy's body was found the next day in what prosecutors described as a "commercial parking lot dumpster."

A law enforcement official previously told The Times the boy suffered "massive injuries," including a broken jaw, fractured ribs and a lacerated liver. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Gaddis and the boy's mother, Kemia Hearn, had dated on and off in the past, but Gaddis was not the boy's father.

The victim's grandfather, Troy Hearn Sr., said Gaddis had been stalking his daughter.

"It's very heartbreaking for him to do that to my 5-year-old grandson," Hearn Sr. said last week. "I'm identifying the body this afternoon. I'm overwhelmed and so angry that I can't even ex-



From Troy Hearn Sr.

**ELYJAH HEARN** was found inside a dumpster.

plain it. This guy is a bad guy and it's lucky that the police has him."

Gaddis was in police custody more than once in the past year, but avoided jury trial. He had been in police custody months before records show.

Last July, Gaddis was charged with beating some "metal bar" in. But the case was in mid-December prosecutor an-

was "unable to proceed" on the day of Gaddis' preliminary hearing, according to court records.

Ricardo Santiago, a spokesman for the L.A. County district attorney's office, said Friday that the case was dismissed because prosecutors could not find the victims in the carjacking case at the time of the preliminary hearing.

Gaddis had been in jail for six months at the time, but was ordered released soon after.

Six weeks later, Gaddis was arrested by Los Angeles police and charged with a crime. He was in a custody case with her, re-

lated with false allegations. Gaddis was charged with a crime. He was in a custody case with her, re-

out of power and he ignored check-in calls from the company that issued the device, records show. An alert was sent to the L.A. County Probation Department.

The Los Angeles city attorney's office referred questions to the Los Angeles Police Department, which did not respond to a question about what, if any, measures they took to recapture Gaddis after he ducked his trial date. But given Gaddis had no criminal record after the carjacking case was dismissed, it's unlikely police would have prioritized arresting a defendant who was wanted on a misdemeanor bench warrant.

Vicky Waters, a probation department spokesperson, said Gaddis was "not under active supervision" by the agency because his case had not been adjudicated yet.

"Probation does not have an enforcement role in these circumstances," Waters said.

Times staff writer Summer Lin contributed to this report.

sanitation truck while crossing a street in Encino, a jury decided Thursday.

Kamran Hakimi, now 61, was in a crosswalk at Hayvenhurst Avenue and Ventura Boulevard last August when the sanitation truck struck him. Hakimi had a green light, and the driver made an "unsafe right turn," according to Hakimi's attorneys.

A handlebar on the front of the truck hit Hakimi's head and flung him to the asphalt, where he hit his head, the attorneys said. Hakimi briefly stood and flashed a thumbs up before losing consciousness.

"Mr. Hakimi's life, and the lives of his family, are forever changed due to the negligence of a city of Los Angeles employee," said Rahul Ravipudi, one of Hakimi's attorneys. "This verdict upholds the dignity of the life Mr. Hakimi enjoyed before this tragedy, and we are grateful to the jury who carefully considered all the evidence and provided Mr. Hakimi with the means necessary to get the higher level of care he so desperately needs."

Hakimi is a father of five and worked in real estate before the crash. In October, his attorneys filed a lawsuit against the city in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

The city acknowledged that the driver failed to yield, according to Hakimi's attorneys. But at trial, the city "disputed the damages suffered by Mr. Hakimi, arguing that his life expectancy was limited and that the value of his non-economic damages, including pain and suffering, emotional distress, and loss of enjoyment of life, was minimized because he was in a comatose state," Hakimi's attorneys said.

The jury ordered the city to pay Hakimi \$48.8 million, including \$25 million for future pain and suffering and \$10 million for medical expenses.

The verdict, which comes as the city continues to struggle with escalating legal liability payouts, was larger than any single payout by the city in the last two fiscal years, according to data provided by the city attorney's office. The city can still appeal.

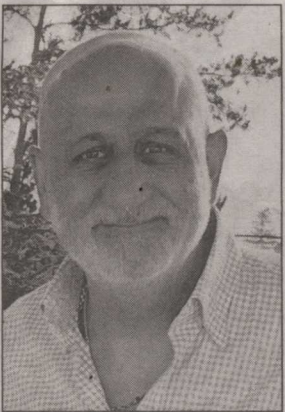
Another Hakimi attorney, Brian Panish, said the case never should have gone to trial, blaming City Atty. Hydee Feldstein Soto for refusing to settle out of court.

"The city attorney chose to force this case to trial, rejected all reasonable settlement proposals," Panish said. "There were many reasonable proposals made by an independent mediator chosen by the city."

Feldstein Soto, through her press office, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Panish echoed arguments made by plaintiffs' attorneys who have said that Feldstein Soto's legal strategies have contributed to rising legal liability costs. They claim that Feldstein Soto has taken cases to trial that she should have settled, resulting in bigger verdicts if the city is found liable.

The city has paid out a total of \$289 million, its highest liability costs ever, in the fiscal year 2025.



L.A. County Superior Court

**KAMRAN** Hakimi is in a coma after being struck.



# Mother's ex is charged in killing of her 5-year-old

By JAMES QUEALLY

A murder charge was filed Friday against a man accused of beating his ex-girlfriend's 5-year-old son to death and leaving the body inside a dumpster in Panorama City two weeks ago, authorities said.

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Los Angeles Times

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Global Mobility

## Employment

Comp. game studio seeks a Game Designer to coordinate impl't & own polished gameplay scen., in-game cinematics & AI behaviors. Req. Bachelor's in Interactive Tech./Digital Game Dev't, Comp. Graphic Art, or rel., plus 2 yrs. exp. as a Gameplay Engr., Tech. Game Designer, or rel. Exp. must incl. with C++, C#, Lua, or other scripting lang., sig. prog. & 3D math skills; exp. with 3D level editors, deep understanding of narrative principles & conveying emotio through gameplay. Salary \$123,800 - \$154,700/yr. Job site: Santa Monica, CA. Work Auth. req'd if hired. Send resumes to: Naughty Dog, 2425 Olympic Blvd., Ste. 3000 W., Santa Monica, CA 90404. Principals only.

Rios, Inc. - Los Angeles, CA  
Project Designer (AS01) -  
Req B Arch (5yr) or foreign  
equiv + 3yrs exp. Salary  
\$64,459 to \$103,000 per yr.  
Designer (XC02) - Req B  
Arch (5yr) or foreign equiv  
+ cswk/interns/exp. Salary  
\$64,459 to \$78,000 per yr.  
Please mail resumes include  
Job ID\* AS01/XC02 to Rios,  
Inc. at 3101 W Exposition Pl,  
Los Angeles, CA 90018.

Energy Storage Systems QA (ESS) Engineer. Req'd: AA in Indust Engrg, EE or related. \$76,586/yr. Resume: Electri-Tech Services, Inc. 19481 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748.

**RDC-S111, Inc.** in Long Beach, CA seeks Sr. Designer: Produce conceptual, architectural schematic design & design development drawings, documents, exhibits on a variety of projects. \$70,000 - \$80,000/yr. Telecommute is permitted within normal commute distance of office location. To Apply, send resume to [Jordan.brown@rdcs111.com](mailto:Jordan.brown@rdcs111.com); refer to Job Title

## Employment

Director, Global Merchandise Licensing Sales for Toei Animation Inc. Reqs Master's degree +2 yrs exp. Up to 20% US & Intl Travel reqd. Hybrid remote. \$138,100 - \$142,250/yr. Jobsite Culver City, CA. Email resume to [yoshikawa-kazuhiro@toei-anim.co.jp](mailto:yoshikawa-kazuhiro@toei-anim.co.jp) /Ref. DGML

Business Development and Digital Media Manager with Island Express Helicopters, Inc. d/b/a Maverick Helicopters in Santa Ana, California. Lead and expand the business development and digital media strategies, ensuring alignment with company's long-term goals. Salary: \$137,093 per year. Contact: To apply, please email resume to [CACareers@FlyMaverick.com](mailto:CACareers@FlyMaverick.com). Please reference job code 20101.11 in subject of email.

**Chief Financial Officer:** Direct the fundraising activities of the organization to achieve its financial objectives. Must have a Master's deg. in Finance, Business Administration, Economics, or related field. Mail resume to MOVE ON USA CO at 5808 WILMINGTON AVE STE 100, VERNON, CA 90058; Attn: Ms. Kim.

TikTok Inc, Creator Growth Manager (Mult.Pos.), Culver City, CA. Source, acquire, & onboard Live-focused US Generated Content creator talent (content creators & influencers, entertainment celebrities, high profile artists & tastemakers) to the TikTok LIVE ecosystem. Domestic travel required up to 15%. Salary Range: \$83600 - \$143556 per year. To apply & info, on benefits offered visit: [lifeattiktok.com](http://lifeattiktok.com) & type Job ID A118288A in search bar. Contact [lpresumes@tiktok.com](mailto:lpresumes@tiktok.com) if you have difficulty applying.

**Engineers:**

## Employment

TikTok U.S. Data Security Inc,  
Senior Data Scientist - USDS  
(Mult.Pos.), Culver City, CA  
Provide insights to influence  
product development using  
advanced statistics, machine  
learning, & programming.  
Domestic travel required  
up to 15%. Salary Range:  
\$167538 - \$312867 per year.  
To apply & info. on benefits  
offered visit: [lifeattiktok.com](http://lifeattiktok.com)  
& type Job ID A52586 in  
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CGC X, Senior Financial Analyst for Boston Consulting Group, Inc. in Manhattan Beach, CA to establish budgets, report on financial performance, and forecast revenues and expenses to support BCG X teams. Reg. Bachelor's deg. or foreign equiv. in Business Administration, Finance, or related field & 2 yrs. of exp. as a Financial Analyst or related occupation, with focus in financial accounting, reporting, and analysis in finance operations and process transformation setting, while providing financial decision support and leveraging business intelligence functions within the professional services industry. Partial telecommute available. Must report to and reside within commutable distance of the listed BCG office. Salary range: \$103,000.00-\$137,000.00/year. Resume to XBCG@bcg.com. Reference Position Number: 41-2025 / 357.2119.4.

Meta Platforms, Inc. (f/k/a Facebook, Inc.) has the following positions in Los Angeles, CA

Software Engineer (Product): Develop, design, create, modify, and/or test software applications or systems for various products or software services (ref. code REQ).

## Employment

Business Intelligence Engineer (4) sought by Snap Inc. (Santa Monica, CA) "Hybrid work permitted - Snap practices a 'default together' approach & expects team members to work in Santa Monica ofc at least 80% of time (avg 4 days/wk). Translate bus questions into actionable & efficient analytics plans & exec. from start to finish. Base salary: \$151,694 - \$196,000/yr. Eligible for discretionary performance-based bonus award. Eligible for equity in form of RSUs. Our Benefits: https://careers.snap.com/benefits. Email Resume: apply2snap@snap.com. Ref. Job Code #BIE4-SM-0725-DC EOE.

**ByteDance Inc, Senior Software Engineer (Mult. Pos.), Culver City, CA.** Design & develop large-scale platforms, systems, & services that powers Enterprise IT relative solution. Salary Range: \$149040 - \$246400 per year. To apply & info. on benefits offered visit: [jobs.byte-dance.com/en/](http://jobs.byte-dance.com/en/) & type Job ID A95569 in search bar. Contact [lpresumes@byte-dance.com](mailto:lpresumes@byte-dance.com) if you have difficulty applying.

Data Engineer III sought by Capital Group Companies Global in Irvine, CA. Hybrid work permitted, when not WFH must report to Irvine, CA office.: Lead dsgrn/implmnt of data/analytics products. Salary: \$175,698 - 218,973/yr, + std co. benefits. Must have unrestricted right to work in U.S. To apply, send resume to Global Mobility Team: cgapplications@capgroup.com. MUST REF. JOB CODE:IR1223KY

Degenkolb Engineers seeks a Designer III in Los Angeles, CA to prfrm engg duties for the dsgn, construction & stability of build'g structures. No trvl req. WFH

## Employment

**Senior Engineer (Los Angeles, CA):** Perform geotechnical design & analysis for geotechnical elements, including deep & shallow foundations, earthworks, retaining systems, tunnels, & underground structures for private & government-funded projects. Support assume task management with geotechnical & tunneling projects. Coordinate & interpret field & laboratory test results from ground investigations for design purposes. Interpret & prepare Geotechnical Baseline & Interpretive reports (GBR's & GIR's). Prepare & review design reports, design calculations, drawings, & specifications. Req's Bachelor's deg plus 8 yrs exp. Salary Range: \$131,040.00 to \$160,800.00/yr. Benefits that Work - Arup, we have a comprehensive and valuable benefits program that works for our employees and their families while keeping costs low. These benefits provide health and welfare security for you as well as paid time off for rest and renewal. Our Global Profit Share Plan (paid bi-annually) provides an opportunity for you to share in the success of the Firm. As a valued employee of Arup, you can also choose to participate in our 401(k) plan with up to 10% company match to help you save for your future. Email resume to [ArupUSinc.mobility@arup.com](mailto:ArupUSinc.mobility@arup.com) or mail resume to Arup, Attn: HR, 77 Water Street, New York, NY 10005. Must Ref: MP835897CA. No phone calls pls. An Equal Opportunity Employer m/f/d/a.

**ENGINEERING-mPulse**  
Mobile, Inc. in Los Angeles, CA seeks Software Engineer: Design, develop, maintain the data architecture and infrastructure, en-



# J O B S

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**500**

## Personal Messages

### Reaching out

My name is Eduardo Gelito

## Employment

**Business Intelligence Analyst** (Los Angeles, CA) sought by Tripalink Corp to use Python, SQL, Tableau & Excel for comp. data analysis of Co-Living & comm. real estate mkts. Collect, process, & visualize data on rents, occup., mkt trends, & ROI. Pres-

## Employment

**Computer Network Architect** - Triple Network INC Design, configure, and maintain Cisco UC (CUCM, Unity, Jabber, Webex) and Contact Center (UCCE, CVP, Webex CC) solutions. Manage call routing, IVR, APIs, CRMs, and video/IPTV systems across

## Employment

**Consulting - People Consulting - Workforce Advisory - People Behavior Change Specialist (Manager) (Multiple Positions)** (1626368), Ernst & Young U.S. LLP, Los Angeles, CA Advise clients on how to measure, shift, design, and



# Closures and raids keep some Metro riders away

[Metro, from B1] the busway was closed for several days.

The decisions to close stations were made in collaboration with local law enforcement, the Los Angeles Police Department and the county's Sheriff's Department, Robert Gummer, deputy chief of security and law enforcement, said during a board meeting last month.

"During the period of the protests, Metro has been challenged by behaviors that put our customers and our employees at risk," Gummer said.

Outgoing Metro chair and L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn expressed concern that closures left peaceful protesters stranded.

"I think the unintended consequences of shutting down those stations really harmed the people who were peacefully protesting and trying to get out of there," Hahn said last month. "There seemed to be a lot of confusion — a lot of people who did not understand what was happening — and a lot of people who didn't know how to get out."

Fears over whether immigration raids would occur on bus or rail lines also affected ridership, which is largely Latino. A 2023 Metro survey showed that more than 60% of Metro bus riders and roughly 50% of rail riders are Latino.

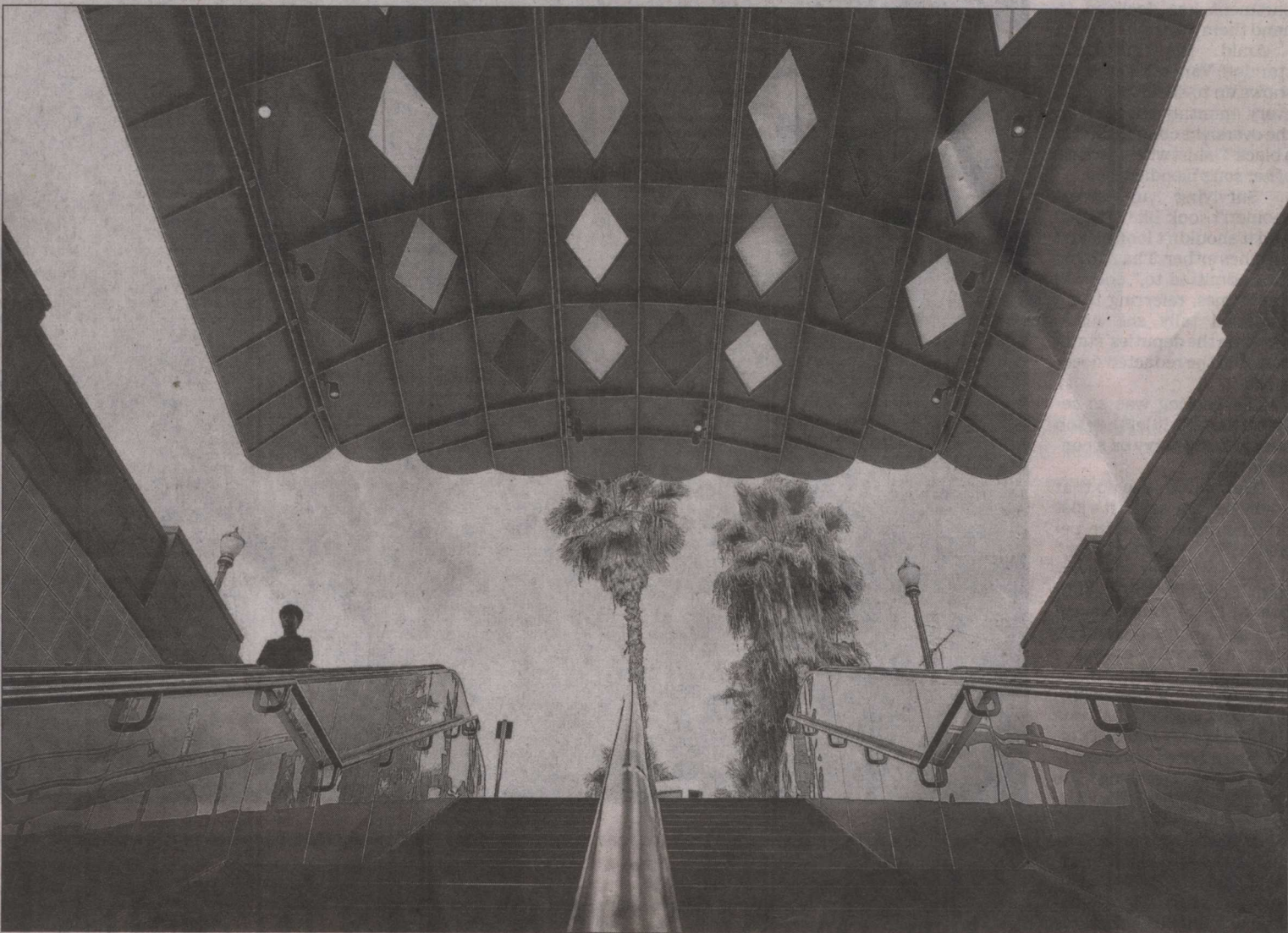
Mayor Karen Bass said the federal response stirred anxiety about using public transit.

"What the administration has done — the provocative actions of the administration — has also led to widespread fear in our city and people being afraid to get on Metro, people being afraid that maybe raids would take place," Bass said. "We have to look at how we make sure that people in our city feel comfortable and safe."

Board member and county Supervisor Hilda Solis echoed the concerns.

"I just pray that our staff as well as our patrons — people who ride our system — are not harmed," Solis said last month. "They're afraid — they're fearful for their lives."

In a widely shared video in June, masked agents descended on a bus stop in Pasadena and detained several people. The stop, which



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

**A PEDESTRIAN** descends the escalator at the Mariachi Plaza Metro station on Wednesday. Metro ridership dropped by 13.5% in June.

is owned by the city, was on one of Metro's bus routes.

Three men who were detained at the bus stop are Pasadena residents and plaintiffs in an ACLU lawsuit filed against the Trump administration over unlawful stops and a lack of access to legal representation during the ongoing immigration enforcement. According to the lawsuit, the masked agents who detained the men did not identify themselves as immigration officers and did not show any warrants. In detention, the men were provided little food and water and were forced to sleep on the floor of the holding center, the suit alleges.

In response, a federal court recently issued two temporary restraining orders to the federal government. The Trump administration has since asked an appeals court to lift the restrictions.

Metro has touted its rise in ridership after a drop during the pandemic emergency, and again after a spate of violence on rail lines and buses that affected public trust. During Metro's annual State of the Agency address, Chief Executive Stephanie Wiggins said that ridership has increased by more than 53% over the last four years and that in a recent survey, customer satisfaction rose to 87%.

It was not immediately clear whether ridership has started to rebound since last month's drop.

"I know that recent events have caused fear, anxiety and heartache in communities we all serve and call home," Wiggins said, acknowledging the recent turmoil throughout the region. "Many of us have friends, neighbors and loved ones who have been impacted."



LUKE JOHNSON Los Angeles Times

**A LONE RIDER** leaves the Civic Center Metro station in downtown on June 19.

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# Fears over weather service cuts

[Weather, from B1]  
the nation.

The president and his unofficial Department of Government Efficiency have said the cuts will help save taxpayers money and reduce federal waste.

Currently, Hanford is tied with Goodland, Kan., as the NWS office with the highest percentage of meteorologist vacancies in the country, with eight of 13 positions unfilled, or about 62%, according to the Times report, which used data from the National Weather Service Employees Organization. Sacramento is the next worse off, with half of its 16 meteorologist positions currently empty.

The Hanford and Sacramento offices cover much of the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada — among the most fire-prone parts of California — and are responsible for providing extreme weather warnings to more than 7 million people. The offices no longer have enough staff to operate on their own 24 hours a day, The Times found.

In a statement, NOAA spokesperson Erica Grow Cei said the agency is working to fill roles at offices with “the greatest operational need” through a combination of temporary job postings and reassignment opportunities.

The agency will also be posting a targeted number of permanent “mission-critical” positions under an exemption to the department-wide hiring freeze to “further stabilize frontline operations.”

“The National Weather Service continues to meet its core missions amid recent reorganization efforts and is taking steps to prioritize critical research and services that keep the American public safe and informed,” Grow Cei said.

The lawmakers and other state officials fear that the staff reductions are not only leaving regional offices in California critically understaffed, but also endangering lives.

“The significant staffing cuts to these NWS offices will affect standard fire weather forecasting and warnings and the safe execution of firefighting efforts, which can have fatal consequences,” the senators wrote.



NOAH BERGER Associated Press

**KAI MONTES** battles the Madre wildfire in San Luis Obispo County on July 3.

California is already contending with explosive wildfires that are expected to worsen in the months ahead. There are currently 10 active blazes in the state, including the 80,000-acre Madre fire in San Luis Obispo County — the largest so far this year — according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The year started with a devastating firestorm in Los Angeles, which arrived after days of urgent messaging from the NWS and leveled portions of Altadena and Pacific Palisades.

Such advance weather warnings are a key part of the weather service's work, including fire weather watches and red flag warnings that not only advise the public of potentially dangerous conditions but also signal state officials to begin positioning resources, according to David Acuña, battalion chief of communications with Cal Fire.

It's also common for National Weather Service meteorologists to deploy to active fires to provide real-time weather information to crews including wind speeds, humidity and temperature, which all influence a fire's behavior, Acuña said.

Acuña declined to comment on federal decisions, but noted that Cal Fire

crews remain prepared for an active season. According to the agency's latest seasonal outlook, fire potential is expected to increase steadily through the summer and into September across the state, especially in the southern Sierra and inland areas.

“We are ready to respond, as we always have been, to aggressively attack fires,” Acuña said.

Federal meteorologists also play a key role in California's \$50-billion agriculture industry, said the senators, who noted in their letter that “staffing shortages at these NWS offices may result in direct harm to farmers, economic losses for the state and country, and a less stable food supply.”

In addition to snowpack and precipitation observations, the weather service also offers soil moisture reports, water supply outlooks and temperature forecasts, all of which are useful for farm operations — particularly as climate change makes water supplies in the state increasingly unpredictable.

The California Department of Water Resources, for example, publishes water supply forecasts and water resources updates that use NWS data, as does the U.S. Drought Monitor.

California is not the only state grappling with climate-fueled disasters and a shortage of weather forecasters.

In Texas, where a devastating Fourth of July flood along the Guadalupe River in Kerr County killed at least 133 people, officials are also probing whether staff cuts at the agency played a role.

Though the NWS succeeded in issuing flood watches and warnings in advance of that event, its local offices closest to the flooding were short several key positions, documents show.

At the Austin/San Antonio office that covers Kerr County, the weather coordination meteorologist — the person responsible for communicating forecasts with the public and the local government — took Trump's buyout in April, according to Tom Fahy, legislative director of the National Weather Service Employees Organization.

Schiff and Padilla requested that federal officials provide updated vacancy information, details on staffing needs and hiring plans, and effects on fire-related work, farmers and the food supply chain by July 31.

Times staff writer Rong-Gong Lin II contributed to this report.

# UC Santa Barbara's new chancellor has science background

BY JAWEED KALEEM

Dennis Assanis, a scientist, engineer and the former University of Delaware president, was named the new UC Santa Barbara chancellor on Thursday, ushering in a new era of leadership for a university that has grown in stature and selectivity under the three-decade tenure of former Chancellor Henry T. Yang.

The University of California regents cited Assanis' success at expanding the research prowess in Delaware as among the reasons they selected him.

During Assanis' time at the University of Delaware, research expenditures grew to \$466 million, a \$290-million increase from 2016, with focuses on health, life sciences and clean hydrogen.

Under his leadership, the university attracted new tenants and created initiatives at its Science, Technology and Advanced Research campus. They included the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals, a public-private partnership that researches vaccines and pharmaceuticals.

UC President Michael V. Drake said he was “thoroughly impressed” with Assanis' qualifications, “particularly his commitment to student success, his focus on academic excellence and his record of accomplishment in expanding enterprise research and innovation.”

Drake — who will step down from his position at the end of the month — said he coordinated with incoming UC President James B. Milliken to select Assanis. Drake did not attend the meeting, and his remarks were read by a staff member.

Assanis, 58, who was born in Greece, will take over leadership of the Santa Barbara campus at a challenging time for the UC system — under the pressure of a hiring freeze, austerity measures, federal cuts to education and research funding and state funding deferrals. The ocean-view campus in pricey Santa Barbara County is also grappling with a student housing

shortage as state pressure grows to increase enrollment.

Regents voted to approve Assanis' annual salary at \$880,000 — a \$60,000 increase over the pay of Yang, 84, who stepped down July 14 to return to teaching and research. Assanis starts in the role Sept. 1.

UC Regents Chair Janet Reilly said in a statement that Assanis “commitment to academic excellence and his penchant for collaboration will steer a bold new era of growth and innovation, serving the campus and all of UC well.”

Speaking via video from Greece — where he was on a family vacation — Assanis said becoming chancellor was a “profound privilege” and that he saw higher education “not only as a ladder of opportunity but as a community of belonging, motivation and progress.”

He said he would “work tirelessly” at “fostering a culture of academic and research excellence, supporting student success and strengthening a bold commitment to access and affordability.”

Assanis, who held the top role at the University of Delaware for nine years, was previously a senior vice president for academic affairs at New York's Stony Brook University and vice president at Brookhaven National Laboratory Affairs.

He began his academic career in 1985 as an engineering professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign before moving in 1995 to teaching, research and administrative positions at the University of Michigan.

Assanis will inherit a campus that is larger, more prestigious and less provincial than when Yang arrived in 1994.

Over Yang's tenure, the campus became more selective and grew in students enrolled and programs offered. Today, the undergraduate acceptance rate is 32.9%, compared with roughly 70% in the mid-to-late 1990s. About 23,000 undergraduates currently attend classes, compared with 15,525 in 1994.

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# CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2025 :: LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



PASSENGERS WAIT to board at the 7th Street/Metro Center in downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday. MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

## Metro's ridership in June lowest of the year

There was a 13.5% decrease from May after immigration raids in L.A. County.

BY COLLEEN SHALBY

After months of a steady climb in ridership, Metro's numbers fell to the lowest levels of the year in June after the immigration raids throughout Los Angeles County.

The transit agency estimated a ridership count of roughly 23.7 million last month on its bus and rail systems — a 13.5% drop from May and the lowest June on record since 2022, when numbers started to rebound since the pandemic emergency, according to Metro data. The large immigration sweeps began June 6.

The decline didn't affect the entire system. Ridership on the K Line, for example, rose 28% on weekdays, 85% on Saturdays and 72% on Sundays. Metro attributed the increase to the opening of the LAX/Metro Transit Center.

A variety of factors led to the drop elsewhere, including actions taken by Metro to close multiple stations during demonstrations after officials said that protesters breached the A line tracks, burned trash cans outside the Little Tokyo station, which was closed for up to 12 hours a day for nearly a week, and that they surrounded and vandalized Metro buses.

In El Monte, where officials said federal agents had been sighted questioning patrons at a Metro station,



A MAN rides the Metro 70 bus as it enters downtown Los Angeles in June. LUKE JOHNSON Los Angeles Times

## Counting down to 'the reveal' of space attraction at Exposition Park

The 20-story museum will display Endeavour as if it's ready to launch



THE NEW museum will house a diverse collection of aircraft and spacecraft. WILLIAM LIANG For The Times

## Her intentions unclear, Harris puts governor's race in limbo

BY LAURA J. NELSON AND SEEMA MEHTA

The Democrats running for California governor have spent the spring and summer working to win over the powerful donors and interest groups who could help them squeak through a competitive primary election.

But the candidates, and many deep-pocketed Democrats, are still waiting for the decision that will have the biggest impact on the race: whether former Vice President Kamala Harris is running.

Since Harris lost to Donald Trump in November, the race to replace Gov. Gavin Newsom has been in suspended animation, with candidates trying to plan their campaigns without knowing who their biggest opponents will be. A few are making contingency plans to run for other offices. And some major donors are waiting to write big checks.

"It creates a little bit of a limbo situation," said Tony Thurmond, the state superintendent of public instruction, who launched his gubernatorial campaign in 2023.

The Democrats in the race are talking to many of the same potential donors, Thurmond said, and most have the same question: "Is she going to run?" The only answer, Thurmond said, is an unsatisfying one: "We don't know."

Since leaving Washing-

ton in January, Harris has mostly stayed out of the public eye, settling back into her Brentwood home with her husband, Doug Emhoff, and talking to close friends and confidantes about what she should do next. She is weighing whether to leave politics, run for governor or run for president for a third time.

Harris is expected to make a decision about the gubernatorial race by the end of summer.

The Democrats who are already running for governor lack Harris' star power, and her entry could upend the race. But the former vice president would also face questions about her 107-day sprint to the White House, what she knew about President Biden's decline and whether someone who has run unsuccessfully for president twice really wants to be California's governor.

"She is looking closely where is the best place to put her energy and focus and her time," said Debbie Mesloh, a longtime Harris ally.

The few public appearances Harris has made this year — meeting with firefighters in Altadena, attending a high school graduation in Compton and headlining a Democratic National Committee fundraiser in the Bay Area — have been fodder for those trying to read the tea leaves.

What does it mean that Harris skipped the California Democratic Party [See Harris, B2]

## Senators denounce weather service staff cuts

BY HAYLEY SMITH

California lawmakers are growing increasingly concerned about federal staffing cuts at the National Weather Service, which they say are harming the state's agriculture industry and putting critical fire operations in jeopardy.

In a letter dated Wednesday and obtained by The Times, both U.S. senators from California, Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla, urged the Trump administration to reverse its considerable cuts to the nation's leading weather agency, which has lost at least 600 employees to layoffs and budget cuts.

BY ANDREW J. CAMPA

Along with the stars on Hollywood Boulevard and the Universal Studios theme park, a new celestial attraction is set to debut in Los Angeles.

The Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center at Exposition Park is expected to complete construction this year, according to its architects, only three years after the first shovels broke ground.

That would make the center ready in time for when Los Angeles hosts visitors from around the world to see the 2026 World Cup, the 2027 Super Bowl and the 2028 Olympics.

One of the aspects that makes this place special is its showcase, the Space Shuttle Endeavour. The spacecraft stands in a stack [See Shuttle, B40]



# Asian leaders urge unity against ICE raids

By MELISSA GOMEZ

As federal immigration raids continue to upend life in Los Angeles, Asian American leaders are rallying their communities to raise their voices in support of Latinos, who have been the primary targets of the enforcement sweeps, warning that neighborhoods frequented by Asian immigrants could be next.

Organizers say many Asian immigrants have already been affected by the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants working in the country without documentation. Dozens of Southeast Asian immigrants in Los Angeles and Orange counties whose deportation orders had been on indefinite hold have been detained after showing up for routine check-ins at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices, according to immigration attorneys and advocacy groups.

In recent months, a number of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese immigrants whose deportation orders had been stayed — in some cases for decades — have been told that those orders will now be enforced.

The Asian immigrants being targeted are generally people who were convicted of a crime after arriving in the U.S., making them subject to deportation after their release from jail or prison. In most cases, ICE never followed through because the immigrants had lived in the U.S. long enough that their home countries no longer recognized them as citizens.

"Our community is much more silent, but we are being detained in really high numbers," said Connie Chung Joe, chief executive of Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California.



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

AAPI leaders warn that immigration raids could soon target Asian communities.

"There's such a stigma and fear that, unlike the Latinx community that wants to fight and speak out about the injustices, our community's first reaction is to go down and get more and more hidden."

On Thursday, more than a half-dozen leaders representing Thai, Japanese and South Asian communities held a news conference in Little Tokyo urging community members to stand together and denounce the federal action as an overreach.

President Trump came into office in January vowing to target violent criminals for deportation. But amid pressure to raise deportation numbers, administration officials in recent months have shifted their focus to farmworkers, landscapers, street vendors and other day laborers, many of whom have been working in the country for decades.

While an estimated 79% of undocumented residents

in L.A. County are natives of Mexico and Central America, Asian immigrants make up the second-largest group, constituting 16% of people in the county without legal authorization, according to the Migration Policy Institute. Across the U.S., Indians make up the third-largest group of undocumented residents, behind Mexicans and Salvadorans.

According to the Pew Research Center, the L.A. metropolitan area is home to the largest populations of Cambodian, Korean, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai and Vietnamese people in the U.S.

So far, the highest-profile raids in Southern California have centered on Latino neighborhoods, targeting car washes, restaurants, home improvement stores, churches and other locales where undocumented residents gather and work.

But Asian businesses have not been immune. A raid outside a Home Depot in Hollywood happened

near Thai Town, where organizers have seen ICE agents patrolling the streets. In late May, Department of Homeland Security agents raided a Los Angeles-area nightclub, arresting 36 people they said were Chinese and Taiwanese immigrants in the country without authorization.

In Little Bangladesh, immigration agents recently detained 16 people outside a grocery store, said Manjusha P. Kulkarni, executive director of AAPI Equity Alliance, a coalition of more than 50 community-based organizations.

"They will come for us even more in the coming days and weeks," Kulkarni said. "So we are only protected when we're in solidarity with our fellow Angelenos."

From June 1 to 10, ICE data show that 722 people were arrested in the Los Angeles region. The figures were obtained by the Deportation Data Project, a repos-

itory of enforcement data at UC Berkeley Law.

A Times analysis found that 69% of those arrested during that period had no criminal convictions. Nearly 48% were Mexican, 16% were from Guatemala and 8% from El Salvador.

Forty-seven of the 722 individuals detained were from Asian countries.

"We know the fear is widespread and it is deep," said Assemblymember Mike Fong, a Democrat whose district takes in Monterey Park and west San Gabriel Valley, areas with large Asian immigrant populations.

Los Angeles City Councilmembers Nithya Raman and Ysabel Jurado spoke of the repercussions the raids were having on immigrant communities.

Jurado said undocumented Filipinos make up a sizable portion of the region's caregivers.

"Their work reflects the deepest values of our communities: compassion, service and interdependence," Jurado said. "Their labor is essential, and their humanity must be honored."

Jurado and Raman called on the federal government to end the raids.

"This is such an important moment to speak out and to ensure that the Latino community does not feel alone," Raman said. "I also want to make it clear to every single person who is Asian American, these aren't just raids on others. They're raids on us."

Times staff writer Rachel Uranga contributed to this report. This article is part of The Times' equity reporting initiative, funded by the James Irvine Foundation, exploring the challenges facing low-income workers and the efforts being made to address California's economic divide.

any specifics about the flight path, announcing that the aircraft will buzz over the Los Angeles Basin, Salton Sea and Central Valley.

The flights are part of NASA's Student Airborne Research Program, or SARP, and will involve two aircraft.

The P-3 Orion aircraft (N426NA) and a King Air B200 aircraft (N46L) will make their way across Southern California, but not in the same flight pattern. The P-3 is a modified four-engine turboprop plane used in various research projects and designed for endurance and range, according to NASA.

The flights will be used to conduct various studies and to sample atmospheric gases and measure land and water surfaces. The information will be used as part of the students' research projects, to be presented at the end of the program.

The data gathered in the program applies to ecology, weather, oceanography, soil science, biology and satellite calibration/validation research. The P-3 is typically stationed out of Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia and has a science payload that can support a combined 40 hours of science flights on each U.S. coast, according to NASA.

The King Air B200 will fly at the same time as the P-3, but will not perform the same maneuvers.

NASA students will get real-world experience during their eight-week program as they assist in gathering data with scientific instruments on the aircraft, NASA said.

"Despite SARP being a learning experience for both the students and mentors alike, our P-3 is being flown and performing maneuvers in some of [the] most complex and restricted airspace in the country," Brian Bernth, chief of flight operations at NASA Wallops, said in a statement.

The aircraft will also make what looks like missed landings at local airports and buzz by runways to collect air samples along the ground.

In previous SARP flights over Southern California, the aircraft buzzed over Glendale and other locales.

## Palisades reservoir that was empty during firestorm is back online

By IAN JAMES

Santa Ynez Reservoir in Pacific Palisades, which was empty and undergoing repairs at the time of the January firestorm, is finally back online, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power announced Thursday.

The reservoir had been out of service since early 2024 because its floating cover had a significant tear that needed to be fixed.

DWP officials had thought the repairs were complete about three months ago, but in April crews discovered as they were refilling the reservoir that there were further tears and leaks in the floating cov-

er. They then drained the reservoir again to allow for additional repairs.

The DWP said that, as part of the work, a crew of divers helped find and repair "pinhole sized" leaks in the cover, and that the reservoir is now operational after workers finished inspections and testing.

"Repairs took longer than expected, as rainstorm damage, sun exposure and wildfire embers had further deteriorated the cover's condition," said Adam Perez, the DWP's interim director of water operations.

"It was a delicate balance between expediting repairs while ensuring there are no remaining issues with the cover when we put the reservoir back in service," Perez

said, thanking the contractors and workers "for their hard work and dedication to restoring the reservoir to operation."

The DWP announced in an emailed statement that the reservoir is now operational again. It did not address ongoing inquiries into why the reservoir was offline during the Palisades fire, and whether this may have contributed to water-supply problems as firefighters encountered hydrants that had lost pressure and run dry.

DWP officials did not respond to requests on Thursday for additional information about the status of the inquiries.

L.A. City Councilmember Traci Park, who represents

the area, said the completion of the lengthy repairs points to a need for improvement in how the city manages infrastructure.

"While I'm glad it's now back in service, the reservoir has been offline since early 2024, including on the one day in history it was needed most," Park said. "Our water infrastructure must be emergency-ready, every day. Anything less puts everything we hold dear at risk."

Residents in Pacific Palisades have questioned why the reservoir was empty when the Palisades fire erupted and destroyed thousands of homes.

In all, the January fires in Pacific Palisades, Altadena and nearby areas claimed at least 30 lives, and damaged

or destroyed more than 18,000 homes and other buildings.

The reservoir's floating cover, made of synthetic rubber, is needed to protect the stored water to comply with federal drinking water regulations.

The DWP drained the reservoir in early 2024 after workers found water pooling on the cover and determined there was a significant tear. The agency said the tear grew to about 100 feet after rains, which complicated the repair work.

The task of fixing the cover was put out for a competitive bid, a process that ultimately took nine months. Only one vendor, Layfield Group, submitted a bid for the work, which was for-

mally approved in late 2024.

Repairs had not yet begun when the Palisades fire erupted in January. After the fire, Layfield's team was sent to do the initial repairs and to inspect for additional damage.

With the repairs now completed, the DWP said in the statement that its engineers were working on solutions for the reservoir's cover "that will incorporate an enhanced design for greater durability and extended service life."

The reservoir, which is now partially filled, has a total storage capacity of 117 million gallons.

Times staff writer Matt Hamilton contributed to this report.



"That 16 miles of river is not runnable in a boat," said Jonathan Yates, an avid kayaker who organized the protest. "There's not enough water in the river."

leave more water in the river. They are calling for measures to ensure flows for boating as Edison seeks to renew its license for the [See Water, A8]

## Crackdown focuses on organized theft rings

L.A. County task force targets thieves as well as the 'fences' that sell stolen items.

By MATTHEW ORMSETH

They entered the stores with shopping bags already full and left empty-handed, sometimes counting cash.

Watching the transactions unfold in downtown Los Angeles were plainclothes detectives from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, who suspected the stores, Quickmart and Big Apple, were buying and reselling stolen goods, according to a search warrant affidavit reviewed by The Times.

When deputies raided the stores in February, they found allegedly shoplifted shaving cream, sunscreen and mouthwash — and \$1 million inside a safe, said Det. Yesenia Olvera, who led the investigation.

Lawyers for the store owners, a married couple, denied wrongdoing and said the cash came from legitimate transactions.

Calling the couple "the embodiment of the American Dream," their attorneys said the seizure of the money threatened to bankrupt the family, which owns nine convenience stores and gas stations throughout Los Angeles.

But authorities allege the stores are part of a wide network of thieves and brokers who are reaping big profits in Los Angeles County. Serial shoplifters — "boosters,"

[See Theft, A9]

## L.A. Zoo's \$50-million breakup

By NOAH GOLDBERG

In 2022, Robert Ellis pledged \$200,000 to create a garden in the Los Angeles Zoo's bird theater.

By January, the city of Los Angeles had sued its nonprofit partner, the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn., amid long-standing tensions over spending and other issues.

Ellis, a GLAZA board member, redirected his donation to a fund for the nonprofit's legal fees.

At stake in the messy divorce between the city and the association is a nearly \$50-million endowment that

each side claims is theirs and that funds much of the zoo's special projects, capital improvements and exhibit construction.

The city's contract with GLAZA, which governs fundraising, special events and more, ends Tuesday, leaving the zoo in a precarious place, with no firm plan for how to proceed.

The zoo, which houses more than 1,600 animals, has become increasingly dilapidated. Exhibits including the lions, bears, sea lions and pelicans have closed because they need major renovations. The last two elephants, Billy and Tina, recently departed for the

Tulsa Zoo after decades of campaigning by animal rights advocates over living conditions and a history of deaths and health challenges.

The 59-year-old zoo, which occupies 133 acres in the northeast corner of Griffith Park, is struggling to maintain its national accreditation, with federal regulators finding peeling paint and rust in some exhibits.

U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors and the Assn. of Zoos and Aquariums found a "critical lack of funding and staffing to address even the most basic re-

[See Zoo, A10]

Amazon's Chief Executive Andy Jassy said last month that he expects the e-commerce giant will shrink its workforce as employees "get efficiency gains from using AI extensively."

At Salesforce, a software company that helps businesses manage customer relationships, Chief Executive Marc Benioff said in late June that AI is already doing 30% to 50% of the company's work.

Other tech leaders have chimed in. Earlier this year, Anthropic, an AI startup, flashed a big warning: AI could wipe out more than half of all entry-level white-

fueled anxiety from workers who fear their jobs could be automated. Roughly half of U.S. workers are worried about how AI may be used in the workplace in the future, and few think AI will lead to more job opportunities in the long run, according to a Pew Research Center report.

The heightened fear comes as major tech companies, such as Microsoft, Intel, Amazon and Meta cut workers, push for more efficiency and promote their AI tools. Tech companies have rolled out AI-powered features that can generate

[See AI, A10]

### COLUMN ONE

## Hollywood, CIA have a mutually beneficial bond

Influence often works both ways between the United States' premier intelligence agency and its entertainment industry

By MICHAEL WILNER  
REPORTING FROM LANGLEY, VA.

At CIA headquarters, beyond the handsome granite seal on its lobby floor and a wall of stars carved in honor of the agency's fallen, experts are at work in the complex tasks of spycraft: weapons-trained officers, computer engineers, virologists, nuclear scientists.

But there are also storytellers, makeup artists, theater majors and ballerinas — Americans who probably never thought their skills would match the needs of a spy agency. Yet the CIA thought otherwise.

Though it rarely gets the spotlight, there's a revolving door of talent between the country's premier intelligence agency and its entertainment industry, with inspiration and influence often working both ways.

The agency is targeting professionals at the intersection of arts and technology for recruitment, CIA officers told The Times, and continues to cooperate with entertainment giants to inspire the next generation of creative spies.

This month, the agency is assisting a New York Times bestselling author on a young adult book examining the foundations of the CIA laid during World War II. Scenes from a major upcoming film production were just shot at its headquarters, a logistical feat at an intelligence campus tucked away in the Virginia suburbs behind rings of security perimeters, where officers roam cracking down on Bluetooth signals. Another

[See CIA, A7]



RONALDO SCHEMIDT AFP/Getty Images

## TEXAS FLOODS KILL DOZENS

At least 32 people have died in flash flooding in the Hill Country, and more than 20 children were reported missing from a summer camp. **NATION, A5**

### Angelenos test blood for lead

Times reporter Noah Haggerty joins fire survivors in seeking answers about exposure risks. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Fans angry over Galaxy's silence

Supporters, many of them Latino, are unhappy with team for not speaking out against ICE raids. **SPORTS, D3**

### Weather

Mostly sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 84/61. **B8**





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[See CIA, A7]



## BUSINESS

# How Trump, Paramount reached a deal

[Paramount, from A1] boost the then-vice president's election chances. Trump's suit had demanded \$20 billion in damages.

The deal resulted from months of back-and-forth among a constellation of power players with competing interests: the president, mogul Shari Redstone, tech billionaire Larry Ellison and his son David, Hollywood super agent Ari Emanuel, CBS News' ousted leader Wendy McMahon and Jeff Shell, a former NBCUniversal chief now with RedBird Capital Partners, which backs Ellison's Skydance.

The settlement, which the president approved late Tuesday, included a commitment by Trump to drop his claims and not sue over the May "60 Minutes" broadcast, according to sources and a Paramount statement.

Paramount said it agreed to pay Trump's legal fees. The remainder of the \$16-million settlement will go toward his future presidential library.

"Larry Ellison is a friend of mine. He's a great guy," Trump told reporters following a Thursday night rally in Iowa. "I think he's going to run CBS really well, and I think he's making a good deal to buy it."

The beleaguered company behind "Mission: Impossible" and "Yellowstone" mustered victories during the negotiations, withstanding the Trump team's earlier demand for a \$100-million payout, the knowledgeable sources said.

The company also refused to apologize for CBS' reporting or edits, a stance to protect its journalistic ethics and 1st Amendment rights.

"This settlement allows Paramount to focus on its prospective sale, and CBS can maintain its principles," said C. Kerry Fields, a business law professor at the USC Marshall School. "But principle has its price, and there certainly was one set here."

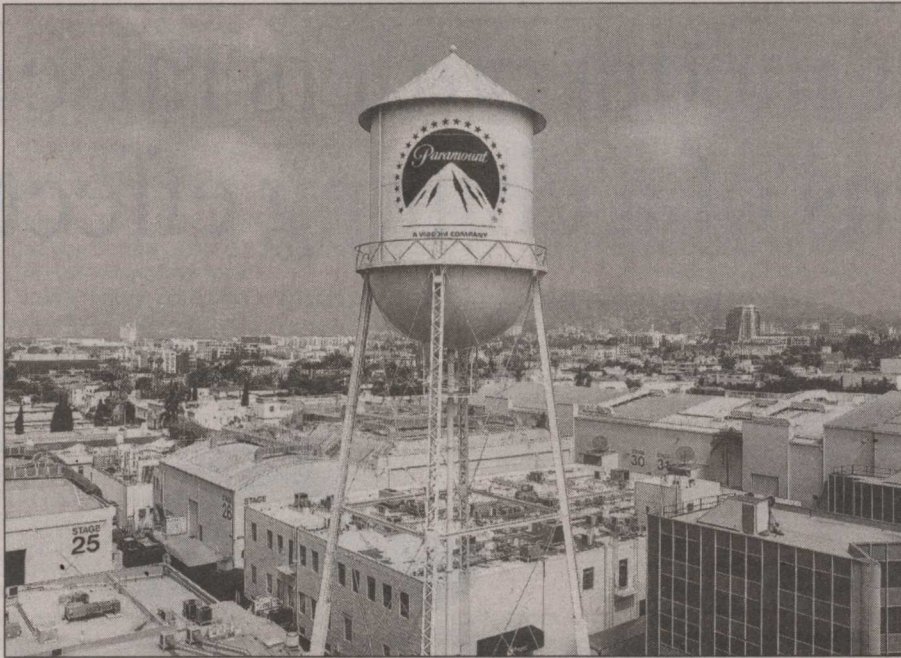
The eight-month skirmish with Trump shined a harsh light on Paramount's vulnerabilities — and deep divisions within the company and its prospective new owners.

Paramount had a narrow window to reach a truce. The company wanted to finalize the settlement before Wednesday, when Paramount held its annual shareholder meeting and three new members joined the board.

"This [settlement] was all about survival — it was that dark," Fields said. "Paramount has to execute the sale to Skydance in order to survive."

At first, Paramount's sale to the Ellison family seemed like a sure bet. Larry Ellison, co-founder of Oracle Corp., is close to Trump and his company is a possible buyer for TikTok, another deal of interest to the president. The landmark Paramount-Skydance deal, struck a year ago, could reshape one of Hollywood's original studios and the entertainment landscape.

Redstone and her family agreed to part with their en-



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**PARAMOUNT'S** skirmish with Trump exposed its vulnerabilities and divisions.

tainment holdings, National Amusements Inc., and controlling Paramount shares. The family's shaky finances were a catalyst for the sale. Redstone has borrowed heavily to meet debt obligations, including a \$186-million term loan from Larry Ellison last year. The family is waiting for the cash from the sale of Paramount and National Amusements to the Ellisons and RedBird, a private equity firm.

But an unexpected misstep altered the deal's course.

Last fall, "60 Minutes" invited Trump and Harris to participate in pre-election interviews. Trump agreed, then backed out. CBS News went forward with a Harris sit-down.

Correspondent Bill Whitaker asked Harris about the Biden administration's rocky relations with Israel's prime minister. Producers used different portions of her answer on two programs: a convoluted response on CBS' Sunday morning show "Face the Nation," and a more succinct part on "60 Minutes."

Trump and his supporters zeroed in on the discrepancy. They accused CBS of doctoring the interview. CBS News denied the allegation, saying the edits were routine.

Days before the election, Trump sued in Amarillo, Texas, ensuring the case would be overseen by a Trump-appointed judge.

His lawsuit alleged the "60 Minutes" edits amounted to election interference — "malicious, deceptive, and substantial news distortion calculated to confuse, deceive, and mislead the public," in the suit's words.

1st Amendment experts said the case had no merit; some figured it was a campaign stunt.

Days later, Shell, the RedBird executive who will become Paramount's president should Skydance take over, held a conference call with top CBS executives. Shell suggested "60 Minutes" release the full Harris interview transcript in a bid for transparency, according to people familiar with the matter.

News executives refused, drawing a clear division be-

tween some high-level Paramount executives and Ellison's team.

Those Paramount executives have bristled over Shell's involvement, including a comment he reportedly made to McMahon late last year, stating the company eventually would have to settle. Skydance has said it has an agreement with Paramount that gives Ellison and Shell the ability to give input on key business issues — even before acquiring Paramount.

A spokesperson for Shell declined to comment.

The role of Shell, ousted from his previous role running NBCUniversal after acknowledging an inappropriate relationship with an underling, has been controversial. Representatives for the creators of "South Park" have accused him of overstepping his authority and meddling with a protracted negotiation over their overall deal and streaming rights to the long-running cartoon. A representative for Shell denied that accusation.

Trump had scored previous victories over media organizations. In December, the Walt Disney Co. agreed to pay him \$16 million, including \$1 million for his attorney fees, to end a dispute stemming from ABC anchor George Stephanopoulos' inaccurate description of Trump's liability in a civil court case. Press advocates

howled.

Paramount held firm. But it failed to get Trump's case dismissed or moved to a court in New York, where CBS and "60 Minutes" are based.

So the company was in a box. Its sale to Skydance requires the approval of the Federal Communications Commission to transfer CBS TV station licenses to the Ellisons, and that consent has been elusive.

In one of his first moves as FCC chairman, Trump appointee Brendan Carr launched an inquiry into whether CBS' edits of the Harris interview rose to the level of news distortion — the crux of Trump's lawsuit.

In February, Carr demanded CBS release a raw transcript of the Harris interview and the unedited footage. CBS complied; the material showed Harris had been accurately quoted.

The Texas judge ordered Paramount and Trump's lawyers into mediation. Talks began April 30.

That weekend, "60 Minutes" ran its report on Trump and the law firms, riling Redstone and others. The Trump team and Paramount were already far apart, the sources said.

Soon, CBS News and Stations President Wendy McMahon was forced out. Knowledgeable sources attributed her departure to months of strife and persist-

ent criticism from Redstone, who serves as Paramount's chair. McMahon also made missteps, including overseeing an unsuccessful rebuttal of "CBS Evening News."

Her exit followed that of Bill Owens, the longtime executive producer of "60 Minutes," who fought efforts to settle.

The day McMahon was ousted, left-leaning U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) lobbed a salvo at Redstone. In a May 19 letter, they warned that Paramount board members risked possible bribery charges if they paid Trump to settle the lawsuit as a way to win FCC approval for the Skydance deal.

By early June, Redstone and the Ellison team were getting restless.

Emanuel, the agent, stepped in to help get the dealmaking back on track, people familiar with the matter said. Emanuel is Trump's former talent agent and one of Ellison's closest allies.

On June 7, Ellison met briefly with Trump at a UFC event in New Jersey. Emanuel is executive chairman of the WME Group and chief executive of UFC's parent company, TKO.

According to a source, Emanuel associate Dana White, the Trump-supporting UFC chief executive, helped facilitate the Ellison meeting with the president, which occurred steps away from the fighters' octagon.

People close to Ellison and Emanuel declined to discuss Ellison's interactions with the president. Representatives of Skydance, Redstone and Emanuel declined to comment for this story.

Finally, a breakthrough came when Trump offered support for Ellison and the Skydance deal, though he continued to blast Harris and CBS News.

"Ellison is great," Trump said from the White House lawn on June 18. "He'll do a great job with it." Late Thursday, Trump called David Ellison "a fantastic young man."

Meanwhile, the clock was ticking. Redstone and others wanted the board to handle the settlement before the shareholder meeting, when

one director stepped down.

Redstone recused herself from voting but made her wishes known.

The settlement was finally reached about 10 hours before the Paramount board switched.

One person close to the legal effort said the agreement "got over the finish line" due to a sweetener for Trump. His team anticipates that Paramount networks eventually will run millions of dollars' worth of free commercials, or public service announcements, in support of Trump causes, including combating antisemitism and increasing border security.

Trump also referenced the alleged side deal.

"We did a deal for about \$16 million plus \$16 million — or maybe more than that in advertising," Trump said. "So [the settlement] is like \$32-to maybe \$35 million."

Paramount said it agreed to a \$16-million settlement.

"Paramount's settlement with President Trump does not include PSAs," the company said in a statement. "Paramount has no knowledge of any promises or commitments made to President Trump other than those set forth in the settlement proposed by the mediator and accepted by the parties."

Skydance declined to comment. Emanuel did not respond to messages.

The settlement does contain another provision championed by Trump: "60 Minutes" will release transcripts of interviews with eligible U.S. presidential candidates after those interviews air, "subject to redactions as required for legal or national security concerns," Paramount said.

1st Amendment advocates were disheartened by the deal. So were Trump's enemies, including the senators who had vowed to investigate the deal for bribery.

Paramount's move to "settle a bogus lawsuit with President Trump over a '60 Minutes' report he did not like is an extremely dangerous precedent," Sanders, the U.S. senator, said in a statement. "Paramount's decision will only embolden Trump to continue attacking, suing and intimidating the media."

## U.S. to rein in AI chip exports to two nations

**A draft measure seeks to prevent China from obtaining the parts via Malaysia, Thailand.**

BY MACKENZIE HAWKINS

President Trump's administration plans to restrict shipments of artificial-intelligence chips from the likes of Nvidia to Malaysia and Thailand, part of an effort to crack down on suspected semiconductor smuggling into China.

A draft rule from the Commerce Department

seeks to prevent China — to which the U.S. has effectively banned sales of Nvidia's advanced AI processors — from obtaining those components through intermediaries in the two Southeast Asian nations, according to people familiar with the matter.

The rule is not yet finalized and could still change, said the people, who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Officials plan to pair the Malaysia and Thailand controls with a formal rescission of global curbs from the so-called AI diffusion rule, the people said. That framework from the end of President Biden's term drew objections from U.S. allies and tech companies, including Nvidia.

Washington would maintain semiconductor restrictions targeting China — imposed in 2022 and ramped

the Malaysia and Thailand additions.

The Commerce Department didn't respond to a request for comment. The agency has offered few specifics about its regulatory vision beyond what Secretary Howard Lutnick told lawmakers last month: The U.S. will "allow our allies to buy AI chips, provided they're run by an approved American data center operator, and the cloud that touches that data center is an approved American operator," he said during congressional testimony.

Nvidia, the dominant maker of AI chips, declined to comment, while spokespeople for the Thai and Malaysian governments didn't respond.

Nvidia Chief Executive Officer Jensen Huang has said there's "no evidence" of AI chip diversion, in general

Southeast Asia is a key focus. Companies including Oracle Corp. are investing aggressively in data centers in Malaysia, and trade data show that chip shipments there have surged in recent months. Under pressure from

Washington, Malaysian officials have pledged to closely scrutinize those imports, but the Commerce Department's draft rule indicates the U.S. still has concerns.

Semiconductor sales to Malaysia also are a focal point of a court case in neighboring Singapore, where prosecutors have charged three men with defrauding customers about the ultimate destination of AI servers — originally shipped from the island nation to Malaysia — that may have contained advanced Nvidia chips. (Nvidia is not the subject of Singapore's in-

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## BUSINESS

# Trump, Newsom lawsuits against media outlets raise concerns of a chilling effect

By Stephen Battaglio



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN Associated Press

**BOTH PRESIDENT** Trump, right, and Gov. Gavin Newsom have taken legal action against news outlets.

Critics of President Trump may have cheered the defamation lawsuit filed by Gov. Gavin Newsom against Fox News for giving the White House a spoonful of its own litigious medicine.

Newsom is suing the conservative-leaning network alleging it intentionally distorted the facts in its reports on the timeline of the governor's conversations with Trump amid the deployment of the National Guard in Los Angeles during immigration raids in the city.

But legal experts are concerned that it may just be the bipartisan escalation of an ongoing trend: use of defamation suits as a political weapon. The tactic, largely used by Trump and his allies until Newsom's salvo, has put the media business and its legal defenders on high alert.

"There has been an outbreak of defamation lawsuits over the last 10 years since President Trump came on the scene and threatened to open up the libel laws," said Ted Boutros, an attorney with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher in Los Angeles. "It has been remarkable and has a chilling effect on speech."

Trump has aggressively used the courts to punish media outlets he believes have crossed him.

Trump extracted \$15 million from ABC News after George Stephanopoulos said the president was convicted of rape rather than sexual abuse in the civil case brought by E. Jean Carroll.

Trump wanted \$20 billion from CBS over because he believed a "60 Minutes" interview with former Vice President Kamala Harris was deceptively edited to help her presidential campaign.

Although CBS denied Trump's claims and 1st Amendment experts said the case was frivolous, the network's parent Paramount Global paid \$16 million to settle without an admission of wrongdoing.

Trump is also continuing his lawsuit against the Des Moines Register over a poll that showed him losing Iowa in the 2024 election, moving it to state court on Monday after the case appeared to be faltering at the federal level.

Trump hasn't stopped there.

On June 25, he threatened CNN and the New York Times with legal action over their coverage on an early intelligence report that said the military attack on Iran's nuclear program had set it back only a few months.

On Monday, Tom Homan, Trump's chief advisor on border policy, called for the Department of Justice to investigate CNN for reporting on the existence of an app that alerts users to Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities.

"We have crossed over into a new world," said Lee Levine, a retired 1st Amendment attorney whose clients

included CBS News. "Everybody has taken note and tried to position themselves the best that they can to weather the assault."

Newsom, a contender for the 2028 Democratic presidential nomination, took his shot June 27 with a suit alleging Fox News intentionally manipulated its coverage of a late-night June 6 phone call he made to Trump. Trump later falsely stated on June 10 that the two were in contact "a day ago," while Newsom asserted they never spoke after June 6.

Newsom's lawyers allege in the complaint that by making the call seem more recent, Trump could sug-

gest they discussed the deployment of troops to Los Angeles, which they had not.

The governor's legal team alleged the conservative network's coverage covered up Trump's false statement that the two had spoken on June 9 while a banner on the bottom of the screen said, "Gavin Lied About Trump's Call."

The suit asks for \$787 million — the amount Fox paid Dominion Voting Systems to settle its defamation case over false statements — if Newsom doesn't get a retraction and on-air apology from host Jesse Watters, who presented the segment on the calls. (Fox News has called the suit a publicity

stunt and said it will fight it in court.)

Andrew Geronimo, director of the Dr. Frank Stanton First Amendment Clinic at Case Western Reserve University School of Law, believes Newsom's actions are tailored to get the public's attention rather than that of the court itself.

Newsom has been aggressive in his efforts to combat misinformation disseminated by right-wing media outlets, and the lawsuit turned it up a notch.

Experts say high-profile politicians have the ability to get their message out without going to court. "The idea that there is this dollar amount in the millions that

they've been damaged by the reporting rather than coming out there and account the facts straightforwardly I think is sort of laughable," Geronimo said.

The calls for possible legal actions against journalists reporting on information leaked by government officials, as is the case in the Iran intelligence stories, is considered a far more troubling development.

The long-term danger is that the suits can ultimately weaken laws that protect news media freedoms, such as the ability to publish government information in the public interest.

"With everything the U.S. Supreme Court has been doing lately, all of these press protections could be on the table," Geronimo said. "Journalists for years have relied on Supreme Court case law that, if someone leaks something to them, they can publish it as long as they did not participate in the illegal collection of it."

The chilling effect could be particularly acute for large publicly owned media companies that have business before the government.

It's unlikely that CBS parent Paramount Global would settle over "60 Minutes" if it did not have an \$8-billion merger deal pending that requires approval of the Federal Communications Commission now led by Trump appointee Brendan Carr.

"The fusion of libel suits and government officials in office is a pernicious development," Boutros said. "When you have the president of the United States ... wielding defamation suits when they have some degree of power over those companies that they can assert, that puts the companies in a terrible position."

It also puts more strain on the legal system. While Trump and Newsom are getting headlines, Boutros noted there are similar politically motivated defamation cases coming in with "useless claims that we have to litigate."

"It's costly for people who are just participating in a public debate," he said. "We'd rather have less business and more freedom of the press."

## U.S. goods to enter Vietnam duty-free in new trade deal

By PAUL WISEMAN AND ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL

WASHINGTON — President Trump announced a trade deal with Vietnam on Wednesday that would allow U.S. goods to enter the country duty-free.

Vietnamese exports to the United States, by contrast, would face a 20% levy.

On his Truth Social platform, Trump declared the pact "a Great Deal of Cooperation between our two Countries."

In April, Trump announced a 46% tax on Vietnamese imports — one of his so-called reciprocal tariffs targeting dozens of coun-

European Union and Japan.

The United States last year ran a \$122-billion trade deficit with Vietnam. That was the third-biggest U.S. trade gap — the difference between the goods and services it buys from other countries and those it sells them — behind the ones with China and Mexico.

In addition to the 20% tariffs, Trump said the U.S. would impose a 40% tax on "transshipping" — goods from another country that stop in Vietnam on their way to the United States. Washington complains that Chinese goods have been dodging higher U.S. tariffs by transiting through Vietnam.

A February study in the



BAR AND NIGHTCLUB owners call the lid rule a small price to help protect customers from drink spiking.

JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times



# Galaxy's silence on ICE raids angers fans

The team's supporter groups are expressing their frustration at actions targeting region's Latino community

BY EDUARD CAUICH

Gloria Jiménez and Bruce Martin, leaders of a Galaxy supporter group called the Angel City Brigade, are certain this is no time to be quiet.

Since its founding in 2007, Angel City Brigade, one of the Galaxy's largest fan groups, has made its voice heard in Sections 121 and 122 of Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson.

On Friday, during the typically festive Fourth of July fireworks game, Galaxy supporter groups expressed their frustration and anger over seeing Southern California's Latino community targeted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in recent weeks.

The fans say they are upset by the Galaxy management's silence amid ICE's presence in the Latino community. The majority of Galaxy fans are Latino, but the team has not issued any statements in support of fans, remaining as quiet as the Dodgers until the MLB team felt pressure and made a \$1-million donation to benefit families affected by the raids.

The Galaxy and representatives of the teams' supporter groups have held closed-door talks, but it didn't lead to a public statements by the club. Outside the stadium before the match against the Whitecaps on Thursday, Angel City Brigade displayed signs that read "Stop the Raids," "Free Soli" and "No One is Illegal."

At the end of the national anthem, "Victoria Block," the section where most of the Galaxy's fan groups stand, unfurled a tifo with three images: a farmworker; Roy Benavidez, a U.S. Army Medal of Honor recipient; and Elena Rios, president of the National Hispanic Health Foundation. At the bottom, the banner read: "Fight Ignorance, Not Immigrants."

During the 12th minute of the match, Angel City Brigade left the stands in protest. Supporter groups the Galaxians and Galaxy Outlawz protested silently, carrying no drums or trumpets. They also did not sing or chant during the game.

"What's going on in Los Angeles has nothing to do with the players. They know that. What's going on in Los Angeles we don't like," Manuel Martínez, leader of the Galaxy Outlawz, said before the match. "I belong to a family of immigrants who became citizens. So we know the struggle that people go through. We know that there are hard-working, innocent workers out there."

The Riot Squad, on the other side of the stadium, also remained silent and displayed a message that read: "We like our Whiskey Neat, and our Land and People Free."

This is not the first time Galaxy fan groups have taken action when they were unhappy with team management.

Angel City Brigade, along



JILL CONNELLY Los Angeles Times

A BANNER reading "Fight Ignorance, Not Immigrants" is displayed at Dignity Health Sports Park before the Galaxy's match on Friday.



WILLIAM LIANG Associated Press

GALAXY forward Joseph Paintsil, left, and Vancouver forward Jayden Nelson vie for the ball.

## Paintsil scores twice in Galaxy's victory

Joseph Paintsil had two goals, Matheus Nascimento also scored a goal and the Galaxy beat the Vancouver Whitecaps 3-0 on Friday night to end a three-game winless streak.

The Galaxy (2-13-6), the defending MLS Cup champion, won for the first time since it beat Real Salt Lake 2-0 on May 31 to snap a 16-game winless streak to open the season. The Galaxy went into the game with 13 points, fewest in all of MLS.

The Whitecaps (11-4-5) have lost three of their last four. Vancouver is second in the Western Conference with 38 points, behind San Diego (39).

Edwin Cerrillo flicked a shot from 30 yards out that was deflected by goalkeeper Yohei Takaoka and Nascimento put away the rebound with a first-touch finish to open the scoring in the second minute.

Paintsil made it 2-0 in the 60th. Gabriel Pec played an long arcing ball to the top of the penalty box, where Marco Reus tapped a first-touch pass to a wide-open Paintsil, who calmly flicked a shot inside the back post from the left side of the area.

Paintsil converted from the penalty spot in the 77th minute for his first career multi-goal game. The 27-year-old forward has three goals and one assist this season after he finished with 10 goals and 10 assists last season, his first in MLS.

Novak Micovic had a save for L.A. The Galaxy had 55% possession and outshot Vancouver 12-6.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

with other groups such as LA Riot Squad, Galaxy Outlawz and the Galaxians, led boycotts while demanding the removal of then-team president Chris Klein after mismanagement and decisions they felt didn't make the team competitive enough to win. Their effort paid off: Klein stepped down and new management eventually led the club to its sixth MLS championship at the end of last season.

On Friday, in addition to issuing a statement reaffirming their "non-discriminatory principles, which oppose exclusion and prejudice based on race, origin, gender identity, sexuality or gender expression," the fans decided to organize a fundraiser to support pro-immigrant organizations affected by the Trump administration's budget cuts: Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), Border Kindness and Immigrant Defenders Law Center.

To raise funds, they sold T-shirts with an image of a protester in Chinatown confronting an ICE agent.

"This is our way of showing that we want to help, and to fight what's going on," said Martin, an L.A. native.

The T-shirt sales raised \$4,000 for the three organizations.

Previously, Angel City Brigade, like other Galaxy supporter groups, decided not to travel to the June 28 road match against the Earthquakes in San José as a precaution against the raids. About 600 Galaxy fans typically attend the road match.

"We have members who have not been able to work. We have members who have

not been able to go out to games or attend events. San José would have been one of them," Jiménez said. "We decided that as a group, we couldn't travel without leaving our brothers and sisters here. So in solidarity with the people who can't attend because of fear of what's going on, we decided to cancel the event."

While the other two professional soccer teams in Los Angeles — LAFC and Angel City FC — have issued public statements in support of the Latino immigrant community, the Galaxy's ownership has not addressed the issue. Angel City took its support further, wearing "Immigrant City Football Club" warm-up shirts, giving away some shirts to fans and selling more on its website as a fundraiser to support an organization that provides legal support for immigrants.

So far, the only member of the Galaxy who has addressed the issue publicly is head coach Greg Vanney.

"I think we all know someone who is probably affected by what's going on, so it's hard from a human standpoint not to have compassion for the families and those who are affected by what's going on," Vanney said before a game against St. Louis City SC in June. "We have to really help each other, versus expecting others to do it," Jiménez said. "That the support didn't come from our team, as we expected, broke our hearts into a thousand pieces."

In the past, the Galaxy and supporter groups have collaborated while celebrating Latin American countries, incorporating their cultural symbols into team

merchandise. But amid the Galaxy's silence, fans are starting to doubt the sincerity of the cultural celebrations.

"It's sad and disappointing to me. This team that has been in Los Angeles since the mid-1990s, and they've leveraged the culture for publicity. When they signed [Mexican soccer star] Chicharito for example, they were strong on Mexican culture and things like that. So when this all started, you would think that they would be for their culture, that they would be there for the fans," Jiménez said. "And by not saying anything, it doesn't say that they really care about it. Families are being torn apart and they just stay silent."

Jiménez said there isn't a day that goes by that she doesn't cry or feel anger about the ICE raids.

"We already know what we are to them, we are not friends or family," she said of the Galaxy. "We are fans and franchise."

Martin said he has received messages on social media, including from Galaxy fans and supporters of other teams, criticizing his stance. However, Angel City Brigade said its members made a unanimous decision to protest.

"We have always had moments where we have a very clear vision about how we feel," Jiménez said. "And I think this is one of the times when everyone has made the same decision."

Galaxy fans plan to stage more protests during the team's next home match.

This article first appeared in Spanish via L.A. Times en Español.

### SOCCER ROUNDUP

## PSG closer to another trophy in Club World Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Désiré Doué scored in the 78th minute, and Paris Saint-Germain moved a

Hakimi said. "We are really happy. We know Bayern is one of the teams that plays similarly to us. They are a strong team. It was a really good effort today, a really



### Real Madrid beats Borussia Dortmund

Kylian Mbappé's spectacular bicycle kick was among three goals in second-half stoppage time, and



# LOS ANGELES WAVE BUSINESS

## Black cannabis business owners aren't seeing social equity

By DION RABOUIN  
Business Editor

For many Black cannabis business owners in Los Angeles, the dream of economic empowerment has turned into a fight for survival.

### The Bottom Line

By Dion Rabouin



The legal cannabis industry in California was touted as a chance to rectify decades of injustice against communities of color. But to put it simply, that hasn't happened so far. Legal marijuana sales are booming across California, but the benefits have largely bypassed Black entrepreneurs, who were supposed to be the primary beneficiaries of the state's Social Equity Program.

Black cannabis owners make up just 4% of all marijuana retailers in the state, despite being among the most targeted by the criminal justice system during the war on drugs, according to data from advocacy group Cannaculture.

In the case of the Social Equity Program, the money is there. The California Department of Cannabis Control has allocated \$100 million to support local programs, and Los Angeles alone has received more than \$22 million. But much of that money has been tied up in bureaucratic hurdles with Black business owners accessing the funds



An employee at a marijuana dispensary prepares a customer's order. The benefits of legal marijuana sales have largely bypassed Black entrepreneurs, Business Editor Dion Rabouin writes.

Courtesy photo

they need to get fully operational. Instead of being a bridge to economic opportunity, the program has become another barrier.

Osajefu Oyadeye, a licensed cannabis business owner in Los Angeles, laid bare the emotional toll at a recent L.A. Cannabis Regulation Commission meeting.

"I'm actually fighting back the tears because I actually believed in this program," Oyadeye said, according to a report from California Black Media. "If the social equity program isn't reparations for the war that was fought

against me and those like me in my community, then what is it?"

Oyadeye is not alone. Across the city, Black business owners like Asia Allen — who runs a dispensary that she says generates \$120,000 a month — are struggling with a reality that makes it nearly impossible to thrive. After taxes, fees and payroll, Allen is left with just \$2,000 in profit. This is before even considering the high cost of purchasing product for her store.

"I'm so busy trying to keep up with taxes, and payroll, and

rent, and pay my people, I can't survive like this," Allen said at the regulation commission meeting. "We can't survive like this. We need your help."

This isn't just about one business owner. This is a pattern, and it's one that has been playing out across Los Angeles, a city that promised Black entrepreneurs a chance at economic equity in the cannabis market.

The numbers don't lie. California's cannabis taxes are some of the highest in the nation, and those taxes, combined with li-

censing fees and operating costs, are adding hurdles to success for many small, Black-owned businesses.

But it's more than just the financial burden. It's also the red tape, the delays in funding and the lack of meaningful support that has left many Black entrepreneurs struggling to keep their businesses open.

The situation has grown so dire that the number of inactive and surrendered cannabis licenses in California now surpasses the number of active ones. For all

the talk of creating an equitable market, the reality is that the legal cannabis industry has become a space where well-capitalized corporations thrive while small, minority-owned businesses fight for scraps.

In Los Angeles, 70% of cannabis retailers are reportedly at risk of going out of business, according to a recent survey from the United Cannabis Business Association. For many, the numbers are not just statistics — they are the lived reality of Black entrepreneurs struggling to keep their businesses afloat amid mounting obstacles.

What's clear is that California's cannabis industry has failed to deliver on its promises of equity. The people who were supposed to benefit the most — Black business owners — are being squeezed out by a system that was never designed to support them in the first place.

Politicians can talk about equity all they want, but until they address the real barriers — including tax relief, streamlined licensing and easier access to capital — this system will continue to fail the people it was meant to help.

The California cannabis industry was supposed to be a model for the nation, a chance to build something better. Instead, it's become a cautionary tale for how even the most well-intentioned policies can fall short when they're not designed with the people they're meant to serve in mind.

*Dion Rabouin is The Wave's business and digital editor. Feel free to send suggestions and story ideas to [Dion@wavepublication.com](mailto:Dion@wavepublication.com).*

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## STREET BEAT

**'How optimistic are you about the future?'**



**PHYLLIS HILLARD**  
LOS ANGELES

"I'm always optimistic. I'm a glass half full-type person. ... I think the way the media makes everything look has a lot to do with it."



**DEREK JOHNSON**  
MONROVIA

"It makes me glad that I'm older and can remember what it was like before all this stuff. Americans are independent and we don't like to be told what to do."



**NORMA TAYLOR**  
LOS ANGELES

"Presently, I'm not that optimistic. I think we are in for hard times and the country is being split between rich people and the rest of us."



**NAOMI RUIZ**

# Frustrated residents ask: Where's the green?

Eight years after Measure A passed, people want to know: Where are the parks?

BY **STEPHEN ODUNTAN**  
Contributing Writer

**SOUTH LOS ANGELES** — In 2016, Los Angeles County voters passed Measure A with the hope of transforming the region's neglected parks.

Framed as a once-in-a-generation fix to decades of under-investment, the parcel tax was designed to fund parks, open space and recreation facilities with a strong emphasis on equity — channeling resources to areas long deemed "park poor."

Almost nine years later, in parts of South Los Angeles, residents say the results don't match the rhetoric.

*Stephen Oduntan is a freelance reporter for Wave Newspapers.*



Youngsters use the Watts Skate Park, which opened earlier this year. One Watts resident complained: 'They're pouring concrete, not planting trees,' in a part of the city that is short on green spaces and park land.

Courtesy photo

"We get more damn skate parks than we do shade," said William Taylor, a longtime Watts resident. "They're pouring concrete, not planting trees. If you want to see a skate park, go to Washington and Imperial. It's all concrete. No grass, no shade, no beautification. That ain't equity."

Taylor pointed to Freedom Park in Jordan Downs as emblematic.

"They call it Freedom Park, but it looks like a drought-resistant desert. No trees. Just rocks and heat," he said.

Taylor isn't alone in his criticism. Tim Watkins, president of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee and a lifelong resident of the area, said the root problem goes deeper than landscaping decisions.

"We've proposed real green space on cultural grounds since the '60s," Watkins said. "But land that was supposed to be parkland was sold under the table to politically connected developers — without any public

See PARKS, Page 11

# SIMPLY DAZZLING



The Dazz Band was one of the featured performers July 5 at the Inglewood Music Festival at Darby Park. The daylong event also featured Poncho Sanchez, Tierra, Yo Yo and the Delfonics Experience.

Photo by Viola Gray

## Officials plan to join lawsuit against feds over L.A. raids

### STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

**LOS ANGELES** — Elected officials throughout Los Angeles County are planning to join a proposed class-action lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union against the federal government on behalf of people who allege they were unlawfully stopped or detained by federal agents.

The lawsuit alleges that federal agencies, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, have engaged in unconstitutional and unlawful immigration enforcement raids by targeting Angelenos based on their perceived race and ethnicity and also denying detainees constitutionally mandated due process.

During a July 8 news conference in downtown Los Angeles, City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto, Mayor Karen Bass and other regional mayors said they plan to assert their rights under the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which enshrines the principle of federalism, where the federal government and individuals states share

See RAIDS, Page 11

## Recreation Center renamed to honor Barry White

BY **SHIRLEY HAWKINS**  
Contributing Writer

**SOUTH LOS ANGELES** — Hundreds of community residents recently gathered at the South Park Recreational Center to celebrate the renaming and dedication ceremony for the Barry White Recreational Center in honor of the late singer



"One thing is for certain," City Councilman Curren Price said during the park ceremony. "Barry White never forgot his roots and he was proud of his neighborhood. Tonight, we gather not only to celebrate his incredible legacy but to reaffirm his enduring commitment to this neighborhood through the rededication of this community space."

White classics.

In his autobiography, White recalled that he was greatly influenced by his mother, who was fond of playing classical music at home.

The music lover often tried to emulate the piano playing he heard on his mother's records.

A humorous incident occurred in his youth when White's voice suddenly changed from a



## CALIFORNIA

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GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times



JULIANA YAMADA Los Angeles Times

SURVIVORS of the Palisades and Eaton fires are seeking answers about their exposure to contaminants.

Voices NOAH HAGGERTY STAFF WRITER

## How covering the L.A. fires affected my blood

Like hundreds of Angelenos exposed to contaminants as disaster struck in January, this reporter decided to get tested for lead

I watched my blood snake through the tube stuck into my arm as I sat under a canopy erected by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at an Altadena church.

Four months prior — almost to the hour — I stepped out of my car in Pacific Palisades to wailing sirens, raining ash and fleeing people.

Now, like hundreds of others, I desperately wanted to know: Had lead once locked away in the homes of the Palisades and Altadena seeped into my bloodstream? And, if so, how much now sat in the vial in the hands of Jessica Segura, a nurse with the Department of Public Health?

Tania Rysinski took my chair after me. She had evacuated from Pasadena and, after a trying remediation process, had moved back home with her husband and 3-year-old daughter. I asked what brought her to the Eaton fire resource fair.

"I also worry," she told me. "My daughter is the one that we worry about the most."

Despite hours of reading about and discussing remediation and health hazards with friends and family, Rysinski found little certainty that her family was safe. I shared her apprehension.

Alongside other health and environment reporters at The Times, I've

read thick scientific studies, reviewed reams of data and interviewed dozens of experts to understand what dangerous compounds, transported by wind and smoke, had laced our water systems, settled into homes and embedded themselves in the soil and our bodies.

Even so, our reporting left me feeling mostly frustrated with my brain. Several times, after I interviewed residents in the burn areas, they would say: You've covered this in detail. Would you feel comfortable moving back here with kids?

I didn't know.

A 20-foot-tall flame staring at you

[See Blood, B7]

## Clergy bear witness as migrants appear in immigration court

Faith leaders lend moral authority at hearings across the state. 'We're there trying to appeal to a higher authority than ICE,' one pastor says.

BY MELISSA GOMEZ

## Altadena locals reluctant to sue county over fire

Lawsuits over delayed alerts fizzle as victims weigh risk, effort and slim odds of success.

BY GRACE TOOHEY  
AND JENNY JARVIE

For many residents of west Altadena, it's hard to shake the feeling that they were victimized twice by the January firestorm that swept into their neighborhood.

Not only were massive swaths of the area destroyed in the blaze, but hundreds were forced to flee in dangerous conditions because evacuation alerts came hours after smoke and flames threatened their community. Many believe the delayed alerts in west Altadena were a key reason all but one of the Eaton fire's 18 deaths were there.

Revelations about the delay, made by The Times in January, sparked outrage toward Los Angeles County officials, who were tasked with issuing evacuation alerts, and prompted an on-

going independent investigation into what went wrong.

Despite continued community anger and frustration, no one has yet filed suit against the county for the lapse.

Almost a dozen residents told The Times that they were, at one point, considering a legal case against the county over its delayed evacuation alerts, but as the six-month deadline to file such a claim rapidly approached, more and more people abandoned the idea.

Several decided after talking to lawyers that they couldn't risk jeopardizing any settlement with Southern California Edison, which hundreds of residents already have sued, alleging the utility started the fire and should be held liable — potentially to the tune of \$24 billion to \$45 billion.

Others worried that legal hurdles could make a court battle unwinnable. Many, such as Heather Morrow, simply realized they didn't have the time or wherewithal to keep going, as much as they supported

[See Altadena, B2]

## Run Against ICE protests raids on L.A.'s immigrants

BY TYRONE BEASON

DeMille Halliburton founded a running club 10 years ago to bring together residents of his South Los Angeles neighborhood.

On Saturday, he and several club members joined hundreds of other Angelenos for a different cause, the Run Against ICE, winding through the heart of the city to call for an end to raids by federal agents that have upended life for immigrants.

"We're always trying to find a way to share how upset we are about what's happening in the country right now, to be visible and outspoken," said Halliburton, 61. "Enough is enough."

Runners expressed a mix of outrage, heartache and defiance as they jogged in the hot sun for 15 miles through neighborhoods where raids have happened or that are important to immigrants, from streets lined

with sidewalk vendors, in Koreatown and MacArthur Park to Dodger Stadium, Chinatown, the Fashion District and the city's historic core, a few blocks from the Metropolitan Detention Center, where immigration detainees are housed.

Halliburton's fellow running club member Gabriel Golden said he fears that L.A. and the nation have reached a boiling point because of the aggressive nature of the raids and what he sees as the racial profiling of Latinos like himself by federal agents identifying targets for detention and deportation.

"It's been terrifying, and unacceptable," said Golden, 42, a musician. "One of the first raids was by the Home Depot where I work near MacArthur Park."

Even though he hasn't personally been affected by the raids, Golden, a U.S. citizen who is half Guatemalan,

[See Run, B7]

Voices STEVE LOPEZ COLUMNIST

## A candid take on mortality and the power of friendship